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The Statesman

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PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



MANY EVOLUTIONS
FOR CENTENARIAN
'CITIZEN OF THE WORLD'

P9



'CONGRESS TO FIGHT
'ANTI-CONSTITUTIONAL'
THINKING OF BJP-RSS'

P5



A GIANT AMONG MEN

P7

BUMRAH NAMED CAPTAIN
OF CRICKET AUSTRALIA'S
TEST TEAM OF 2024



P12

SENSEX 78,139.01 ▼109.12

NIFTY 23,644.80 ▼0.100

₹ vs \$ 85.65

GOLD 78,495.00

SILVER 98,000

BRENT CRUDE (IN \$) 74.36 ▲0.37

2025

The Statesman

WISHES ITS READERS A
HAPPY NEW YEAR

WEATHER

SMOG/SHALLOW TO MODERATE FOG IS
LIKELY IN THE MORNING. MAINLY CLEAR
SKY. SMOG/SHALLOW TO MODERATE FOG IS
LIKELY IN THE EVENING/NIGHT. THE
MAXIMUM AND MINIMUM TEMPERATURES
WILL BE AROUND 18 AND 08 DEGREES
CELSIUS RESPECTIVELY.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max. 95 % Min. 61 %

TEMPERATURE

Max: 17.7 °C (+3) Min: -09.6 °C (+3)

SUN RISES 07:14 hrs SUN SETS 17:36 hrs

MOON RISES 09:16 hrs MOON SETS 18:58 hrs

THUMBNAILS



People gather at India Gate on the last day of 2024. ■ SUBRATA DUTTA

We are determined to work even harder in 2025: PM Modi

2024 was a year of progress, unity and steps towards a Viksit Bharat: MyGovIndia

Responding to a video post by MyGovIndia on X, Mr Modi said: "Collective efforts and transformative outcomes! 2024 has been marked by many feats, which have been wonderfully summed up in this video. We are determined to work even harder in 2025 and realise our dream of a Viksit Bharat."

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday said the Union Government was determined to work even harder in 2025 and realise the dream of a Viksit Bharat.

Responding to a video post by MyGovIndia on X, Mr Modi said: "Collective efforts and transformative outcomes! 2024 has been marked by many feats, which have been wonderfully summed up in this video. We are determined to work even harder in 2025 and realise our dream of a



Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted this picture of him taking oath as the Prime Minister of India for the third term. ■ NARENDRA MODI/X

Viksit Bharat."

The video post mentioned the achievements of India in 2024 and the unforgettable moments that marked a year of progress, unity, and steps toward a Viksit Bharat.

Meanwhile, in a series of posts, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) reflected on 2024's memorable moments. Prime Minister Modi's recent international

visits have significantly strengthened India's global partnerships, enhancing strategic and economic cooperation and cultural ties across continents, the PMO said in a post on X.

India's active role in various global summits in 2024 highlights its commitment to promoting international cooperation and a sustainable, equitable world. The country is emerging as a

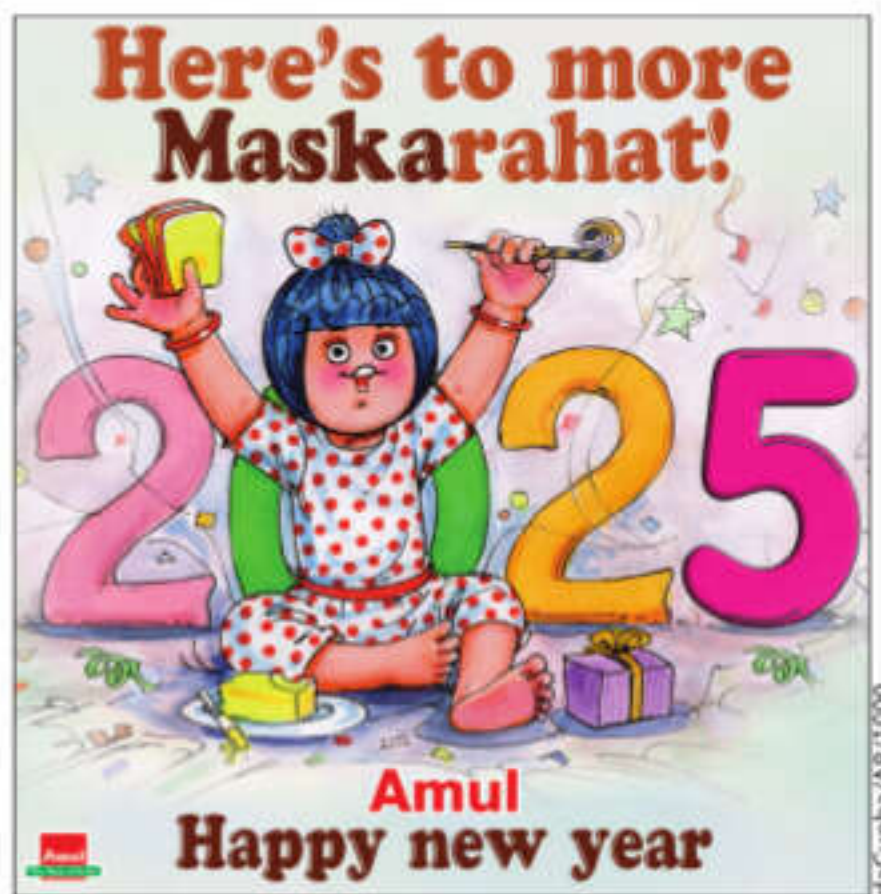


PM Modi cradles a baby in his arms after casting his vote in Ahmedabad. ■ NARENDRA MODI/X

global economic leader with resilience and innovation. It has redefined governance, advanced social progress and led a digital transformation. These efforts are shaping a future of growth and opportunity for all.

India is setting global standards in climate action with innovative policies, renewable energy leadership and initiatives like Inter-

national Solar Alliance, Mission LiFE and Global Biofuels Alliance, paving the way for a sustainable and prosperous future. "Rising as a symbol of progress and resilience, India is earning global recognition for its economic progress, technological advancements and contributions to regional and global stability," the PMO said.



Manipur CM apologises for ethnic violence, calls for unity in the year 2025

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
IMPHAL, 31 DECEMBER

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Tuesday issued a heartfelt apology to the people of the state for the ethnic violence and unrest that erupted in May 2023 and continues to persist, leading to loss of hundreds of lives, widespread displacement, and prolonged tension.

Speaking at a public event, Mr Singh called the events since May 2023 "deeply unfortunate" and expressed profound regret over the suffering endured by the people.

"I feel regret, and I want to say sorry to the people of Manipur for what has been happening. Many people lost their lives and were rendered homeless. I really feel regret and apologise to all victims," the Chief Minister said.

"It is very unfortunate that many people have lost their loved ones, many people had to leave their homes and villages. However, considering the positive developments during the past three-four months, I hope peace and normalcy will return to the state in the New Year 2025," Singh said. Manipur has faced one of its most challenging years in recent history, with ethnic clashes breaking out between the Meitei and Kuki communities over longstanding grievances related to land rights, Scheduled Tribe status, and governance.

The violence, which began in May 2023, has left over 200 dead, thousands injured, and tens of thousands displaced. Entire villages were burned, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) were forced into relief camps, enduring severe



hardship. The unrest also highlighted deeper issues, including the state's fragile social fabric and challenges in governance. Despite a strong security presence, sporadic violence has continued.

In his appeal, the Chief Minister urged all communities to forgive and forget past grievances, emphasising unity among the state's diverse tribal and ethnic groups.

"Whatever happened, happened. Let's forgive and forget past mistakes and start a new life filled with peace and prosperity, with Manipur living harmoniously with all its recognised 34-35 tribes," Mr Singh stated.

"I appeal to all the communities to live together and to make Manipur prosperous with a united effort," the Chief Minister said. "On the eve of a New Year, I reflect on the progress we have made together in 2024 and the challenges we have to overcome. As we step into 2025, I reaffirm our commitment to building a stronger, more inclusive state."

Giving details of incidents of the violence over the past 20 months, the Chief Minister said that so far around 200 people have been killed, around 12,247 FIRs were registered and 625 accused persons were arrested.

'Govt extending all assistance to Indian nurse on death row in Yemen'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

The government on Tuesday confirmed that it is aware of the death sentence awarded to Nimisha Priya, an Indian nurse, in Yemen and said it is extending all possible assistance in the matter.

In response to media queries, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: "We are aware of the sentencing of Ms. Nimisha Priya in Yemen. We understand that the family of Ms. Priya is exploring relevant options. The government is extending all possible help in the matter."

Nimisha Priya, who has been sentenced to death in Yemen, is a trained nurse and has worked in private hospitals in Yemen for a few years.

She was awarded a life sentence in 2020 after being convicted of killing Talal Abdo Mahdi, her business partner,



who she accused of fraud and abuse, in 2017.

Her husband and minor daughter returned to India in 2014 because of financial reasons and in the same year, Yemen was gripped by a civil war, and they could not go back as the country stopped issuing new visas.

Later in 2015, Ms Priya joined hands with Mahdi to set up her clinic in Yemen's capital city Sana. She sought Mahdi's support because, under Yemen's law, only citizens are allowed to set up

clinics and business firms. In 2015, Mahdi accompanied Ms Priya to Kerala when she came for a month-long holiday. During the visit, he stole a wedding photograph of Ms Priya, which he later manipulated to claim that he was married to her.

A plea moved by the mother of Ms Priya had stated, "After a while, Nimisha's clinic began, Mahdi manipulated the ownership documents of the clinic. He also began to take money out of her monthly earnings after telling everyone that Nimisha was his wife. Nimisha had alleged that Mahdi had been harassing her and her family for years."

Mahdi also seized her passport. This was done to ensure that she would not leave Yemen. He tortured her under the influence of drugs. He threatened her at gunpoint several times. He took all the money from the clinic and her ornaments."

ADIEU 2024



The setting sun marks the final evening of 2024 in New Delhi on Tuesday. ■ SUBRATA DUTTA

Quad now a vital force for stability in Indo-Pacific: Jaishankar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

In a social media post on 'X' marking the 20th anniversary of the Quad partnership, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday said the four-nation grouping now stands as a vital force for stability, progress and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

"Two decades ago, the idea of Quad began with a shared response to the Indian Ocean tsunami," he noted.

He also shared a joint statement issued by the foreign ministers of the four Quad nations (India, Australia, Japan and the United States) on the occasion of the grouping's 20th anniversary, reaffirming their commitment to addressing the region's needs together.

The joint statement said that 20 years ago, in response to the 2004 Indian Ocean



earthquake and tsunami, Australia, India, Japan, and the USA came together in service to the people of the region for the first time as the grouping now known as the Quad.

The tsunami was one of the worst disasters in history, claiming the lives of nearly a quarter million people and displacing 1.7 million across 14 countries. "Together our four countries contributed

over 40,000 emergency responders, working with other partners across the Indo-Pacific region to support millions of people affected by the catastrophe. We honour the memories of those no longer with us and recognize the survivors and the families of those who were lost," the statement said.

They said that their foundational commitment to humanitarian assistance and

disaster relief remains strong. "We continue to work side-by-side to prepare for and respond quickly and effectively to disasters across the region. In 2024, our four countries collectively supported disaster preparedness and life-saving relief efforts across the Indo-Pacific, and we continue to build on those efforts to identify new ways to respond rapidly to humanitarian crises and disasters."

The statement further noted that what began as an emergency response to a catastrophe has grown into a full-fledged partnership delivering positive outcomes for the people of the region. Quad countries now work together and with partners across the Indo-Pacific to address complex challenges, from fighting climate change, cancer, and pandemics, to bolstering quality infrastructure, maritime domain awareness, STEM education, count-

er-terrorism efforts, critical and emerging technologies, and cyber security.

"Since 2021, the Leaders of our four nations have met annually to drive the Quad's positive contributions across South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific," it added.

The Quad nations said that as four partners, they share a vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific that is peaceful, stable, and prosperous, underpinned by effective regional institutions. "We reaffirm our unwavering support for ASEAN's centrality and unity as well as mainstreaming and implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. We respect Pacific-led regional architecture, foremost the Pacific Islands Forum. We are also steadfast in our support for the Indian Ocean Rim Association, the region's premier organisation," they added.

CBDT extends deadline for taxpayers under Vivad Se Vishwas scheme to 31 Jan

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) extended the deadline for taxpayers participating in the Vivad Se Vishwas scheme to 31 January 2025. Initially, the deadline was set for 31 December 2024.

The CBDT stated that the extension allows taxpayers additional time to determine the amount payable as specified in column (3) of the relevant table in the scheme.

For taxpayers categorised as new appellants, the amount payable for disputed tax on 31 January 2025, is 100 per cent of the disputed amount, increasing to 110 per cent if paid on 1 February 2025.

Old appellants will face a charge of 110 per cent on 31 January 2025, which rises to 120 per cent the following day.

Regarding disputed interest,



penalties, or fees, new appellants are required to pay 25 per cent on 31 January 2025, increasing to 30 per cent on 1 February 2025.

For old appellants, the amounts are 30 per cent on 31 January 2025, and 35 per cent on 1 February 2025.

In case the appeal proceedings are made after 31 January 2020, they will be called new appellants and if done before 31 January 2020,

they will be categorised as old applicants.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the Vivad Se Vishwas scheme, aimed at helping taxpayers resolve disputes with the income tax department.

The scheme enables taxpayers to settle their outstanding tax liabilities by paying the disputed amount along with a specified percentage.



THUMBNAILS



Schoolchildren throng India Gate on a chilly winter afternoon on New Year's Eve in the Capital. SUBRATA DUTTA

3 Bangladeshi immigrants held in SW Delhi: In its efforts to crackdown on the illegal migrants, Delhi Police have apprehended three Bangladeshi immigrants, including a mother-son duo, and another person who were living in South West Delhi, it said on Tuesday. Deputy Commissioner of Police (South West) Surendra Choudhary said, "The mother was residing for more than 20 years and the son came in 2020 due to the family's financial hardship. Both of them have been deported to Bangladesh through the Foreigners Registration Office." The breakthrough came on December 29, when acting on a tip off, Naim Khan was intercepted from Shastri Market and his mother was also detained subsequently from Katwaria Sarai in South West Delhi where they were residing, Choudhary mentioned. Also, the third migrant, Akhtar Seikh, a construction labourer was first apprehended in a case at Sarojini Nagar police station who later got bail and went into hiding after the verification process began. However, yesterday he was traced near Sarojini Nagar railway station. He told the police that he belongs to West Bengal but on being asked about documents, he was unable to show or prove any of his identity proof. On further interrogation he disclosed that he was born in Madarganj, Kochaghata, Bangladesh and he came to West Bengal in 2004 by illegal means by land surreptitiously. There he married an Indian girl in 2012 and made a permanent residence in West Bengal, the DCP said.



LG accuses Atishi of playing cheap politics: Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena on Tuesday accused Chief Minister Atishi of playing politics after she wrote a letter to him claiming that the Religious Committee ordered the demolition of numerous religious structures all across the national capital. Responding to Atishi's letter, the LG office said, "Neither are any temples, mosques, churches or any other place of worship being broken/demolished, nor has any file to this effect come. The CM is playing cheap politics to divert attention from her and her predecessor's failures." The LG has issued strict instructions to the Police to maintain extra vigil against forces who may indulge in deliberate vandalism for political benefits, it said. Saxena's instructions are being strictly followed, as was witnessed during the just gone Christmas celebrations which did not see any untoward incident, the LG office added.

4 injured in LPG cylinder blast at a factory in Northeast Delhi: Four people sustained injuries in a fire caused by an LPG cylinder explosion at a heater factory in Jagdamba Colony, North East Delhi, the Fire Department said on Tuesday. According to the Delhi Fire Services, a fire-related call was received from Jagdamba Colony, Shiv Vihar, regarding a blaze at the factory. In response, four fire tenders were dispatched to the site. The fire broke out following the explosion of an LPG cylinder in the factory, injuring four workers. The injured individuals were immediately rushed to Safdarjung Hospital, where they are currently undergoing treatment, the DFS added. The flames were extinguished, and debris was cleared. A search operation was also conducted to ensure no one was trapped. No additional injuries were reported after the operation's conclusion, DFS confirmed. The police have launched an investigation into the incident. The Factory was reportedly engaged in manufacturing heaters.

Bansuri asks Kejriwal to implement all promised schemes before polls

STATESMAN NEW SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj on Tuesday slammed Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal over his party's "Pujari Granthi Samman Yojna" calling it an appeasement move ahead of the Delhi legislative assembly elections.

She hit-out at the AAP government claiming that it has not paid salaries to the Imams and Maulvis in Delhi for the past 17 months, while accused the party's national convener of beginning a new kind of appeasement politics by announcing honorarium for the Temple priests and Gurudwara granthis. Swaraj, while addressing a press conference here, challenged the AAP chief to implement all the schemes announced by him which also include the Sanjeevani and Mahila Samman Yojna, stating that there was no Model Code of Conduct in place as of now. She said why was there a



need for the AAP to wait for the elections, when they already have their government in Delhi, and can implement the schemes now. The BJP leader alleged that despite being in power for a decade the AAP government never honoured the priests and granthis, nor respected the religious places, but now, Kejriwal is viewing them through the aspect of vote bank politics, and giving them false assurances in the name of such schemes. She also questioned why the pujaris and the granthis were left out till now, while

earlier the scheme was already brought in place for the Imams and Maulvis at mosques. Swaraj further asked the AAP chief as to why have the Christian priests been completely left out in this regard. The BJP leader also raised several questions with regard to the overall state of affairs and alleged misgovernance in the city under AAP's regime which had led people to face problems related to basic services like roads, drainage, sewers, water supply and health, which fall under the AAP government.

Kejriwal launches Pujari-Granthi Samman Yojana; takes dig at BJP



STATESMAN NEW SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday claimed that the BJP, despite governing 20 states and ruling Gujarat for 30 years, did not honour 'pujaris' and 'granthis'. He asked the BJP to start doing the same rather than criticizing him for introducing a scheme for the religious men. Kejriwal announced the Pujari-Granthi Samman Yojana at Marghat Wale Baba Hanuman Mandir, near the ISBT Kashmiri Gate, where the AAP chief along with his wife Sunita Kejriwal, worshipped Lord Hanuman and registered temple priests. Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Minister Atishi visited Gurudwara Sahib in Karol Bagh, registering Granthis as part of the Pujari Granthi Samman Yojna. Sharing a few snippets from his visit to the Marghat Baba Temple to inaugurate the scheme, Kejriwal wrote on his X handle (formerly Twitter), "Today I visited Marghat Baba's temple (ISBT) and launched the Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana. Today is the birthday of Mahantji here. I also celebrated his birthday with him." On BJP's reaction to the said scheme, AAP national convener

expressed taking to social media saying, "Since the announcement of the 'Pujari-Granthi Samman Yojana', BJP leaders have been hurling abuses at me. My question to them is: will abusing me benefit the nation? Your party governs 20 states, including Gujarat, where you've ruled for 30 years. Why haven't you honored pujaris and granthis there? Start now—I've shown you the way." On the other hand, Atishi claimed that the granthis in the Gurudwara Sahib mentioned that it is the first government to think about them since Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Speaking at the registration event, CM said that this day marks the beginning of registrations under this scheme, and as the Pujaris and granthis remain with people through life's joys and sorrows, it is the government's duty to care for them. She said, "When the AAP government is re-elected in Delhi, every pujari and granthi will receive Rs 18,000 as a monthly honorarium." AAP's convener for Delhi Gopal Rai, visited temple pujaris in Vijay Park, and said, "Delhi is the first state where Arvind Kejriwal has announced a Pujari-Granthi Samman Yojana". He added that this move reflects months of deliberation and fulfills long-standing aspirations.

BJP slams move, dubs Kejriwal 'anti-Hindu'

STATESMAN NEW SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

The BJP on Tuesday slammed former Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal for launching the 'Pujari-Granthi Samman Yojana' and dubbed Arvind Kejriwal 'anti-Hindu'. Kejriwal announced the launch of the 'Pujari-Granthi Samman Yojana' on Monday. Under this initiative, temple priests and gurudwara granthis in Delhi will receive a monthly honorarium of Rs 18,000 if AAP is voted back to power. Reacting to the AAP chief's announcement, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said, "Anti-Hindu Kejriwal is now making new promises ahead of the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections. Why is it happening? It is because Kejriwal knows that the false promises he has made have not been fulfilled and, his career is going to get over. That is why he is coming up with more fake promises." Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, Bhatia said, "Today, when he (Arvind Kejriwal) promises to give Rs 18,000 to pujaris and granthis, a question arises in my mind that it has not been long since AAP was in love with liquor mafias and was giving them contracts to open shops outside temples and gurudwaras. Kejriwal allowed liquor shops to open outside all the places that we consider auspicious." "Kejriwal is anti-development. He must learn from the BJP. We



give our report card to people in the state that is going to hold assembly elections. He cannot even answer journalists," the BJP leader added. Bhatia further said, "The Aam Aadmi Party has indulged in cheap politics by exploiting Delhi's children for political gains. This is utterly reprehensible." The BJP leader said that on December 30, 2024, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued an order stating that AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi used videos of innocent children and dragged them into politics. "This is an absolute violation of the Juvenile Justice Act," Bhatia said. The BJP national spokesperson said the NHRC noted that the X post by Delhi CM Atishi and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal had shared a video showing children directly involved in political activities for the party. The commission has asked them to remove the video, but Kejriwal hasn't complied yet, Bhatia added.

AAP govt failed in Delhi, didn't provide benefits of welfare schemes to people: Sehrawat



STATESMAN NEW SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

BJP MP from West Delhi, Kamaljeet Sehrawat on Tuesday hit-out at the AAP Government and highlighted the alleged failures of the ruling dispensation across the assembly segments, which are part of her parliamentary constituency. Sehrawat, while addressing a press conference at West Delhi District Office, issued a charge sheet against the state government, where she flagged its alleged false promises to the people in the area during the past 10 years. She accused the Delhi government of not being able to issue ration cards, stating that a total of 156800 such cards were to be made in her parliamentary constituency, but till 2015 68000 were made, while she questioned as to why the AAP government kept people away from centre's schemes. Sehrawat also alleged that Kejriwal had claimed to bring up 11000 new buses, 500 schools and 20 universities in Delhi, but did not deliver on this promise. The BJP MP accused the

AAP government of not giving farmers their due status, and alleged that it was biased towards them. She further alleged that the condition of Raotula Rao, Indra Gandhi Hospital and other hospitals is so bad in the area, that if a serious patient arrives, he or she has to go to Deendayal Upadhyay Hospital. Sehrawat also pointed out the alleged delay in clearing the "garbage mountains," noting that instead of improving waste management, Delhi has become more polluted. She also pointed out at the alleged failures of Delhi Jal Board, claiming that areas like Balbir Nagar and Dwarka are experiencing sewage water entering households. The MP also accused the AAP government of allegedly misusing Rs 80 crore under the guise of cleanliness, particularly in the Najafgarh zone. She urged the Delhi government to sign the MoU for implementing the Ayushman Bharat scheme across the state by January 5, blaming Kejriwal for depriving Delhi residents of free healthcare under this initiative.

Social activist Vinod Garg joins AAP ahead of Delhi assembly polls

STATESMAN NEW SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

Social activist Vinod Garg joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday in the presence of Rajinder Nagar MLA Durgesh Pathak at the party headquarters here. The son of renowned social worker Dulichand Garg, who has been distributing blankets and food to the downtrodden and organising wedding ceremonies for their daughters was welcomed by Durgesh Pathak into the party fold offering his party cap and patka symbolising its membership. Vinod is involved in social work in the footsteps of his father. Speaking on the occasion, Pathak called Vinod Garg an esteemed social worker from the Rajinder Nagar constituency, who has devoted his entire life to serving society. "Not just him, but his entire family carries a significant legacy of service. His father, Dulichand Garg, has an extraordinary history of working for the people," he said. "I feel very fortunate that such a dedicated and service-oriented person has joined us," he added. Expressing gratitude to the AAP for welcoming him into its fold, Vinod Garg said, "I am honoured to join the AAP and through my NGO, I have always tried to help the poor in any way I can. When I met Durgesh Pathak, I was very happy. I have been inspired by Arvind Kejriwal's work and have supported the party since 2013. I will continue to serve the people through this platform."

7 booked for using forged papers to register as new voters, ERO calls for action against more fraudsters

STATESMAN NEW SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

Delhi Police have registered an FIR against seven people for using forged electricity bill to register as new voter ID in Narela constituency while the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) of Matiala assembly constituency Tuesday wrote to Station House Officer (SHO) of Bindapur and Dwarka Sector 17 for lodging FIRs against six people for using forged documents to register as new voters in South West Delhi. The FIR mentioned the names of seven individuals and was registered under Section 318 (cheating) of BNS at Narela Industrial Area police station in Outer North Delhi. Meanwhile, in a letter addressed to the SHOs, SDM Kapashera Shelly wrote, six applicants, all residents of Matiala assembly constituency have tried to deceive the authorities by tempering the Aadhar card which was used as a proof of residence in their application. Therefore, it is directed

Earlier on Monday, Delhi Police had arrested six individuals for their alleged involvement in a voter ID fraud case in Shaheen Bagh area of South East Delhi. The accused were found to have forged Aadhaar cards and electricity bills to create or modify voter ID cards.

that an FIR be lodged against the applicants and the police investigate the matter to determine the extent of their involvement in the offence and take necessary actions to prevent such fraudulent activities in the future, it added. Earlier on Monday, Delhi Police had arrested six individuals for their alleged involvement in a voter ID fraud case in Shaheen Bagh area of South East Delhi. The accused were found to have forged Aadhaar cards and electricity bills to create or modify voter ID cards.

Delhi Congress chief welcomes several AAP leaders, workers into party fold

STATESMAN NEW SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee President Devender Yadav, on Tuesday, welcomed several AAP leaders into party fold ahead of the Delhi legislative assembly elections. Those who joined Congress today include Sarbjit Singh, the AAP joint secretary from the Badli assembly constituency, Farid Shah, its star campaigner for the last assembly elections, former AAP councillors from the Mustafabad assembly constituency, Parveen and Mohd Maroof, BSP candidate for the 2020 elections MCD polls, and Rajni Suryavanshi, along with a large number of workers. Their formal induction into the party took place on Tuesday at the DPCC office in New Delhi where Yadav presented them with party scarves. Speaking on the occasion, the Congress state unit chief said with the support and cooperation of all those who joined the party, Congress would gain strength and practice creative politics to bring the grand old party back into



'The doors of Congress were always open to those who believed in the programmes and policies of the party'

government in the upcoming legislative assembly polls. Taking a dig at the AAP, he said the leaders, ministers, MLAs, disillusioned with the corruption and authoritarian attitude of Kejriwal, leaders, councillors, and others were deserting the party, which he described as a 'sinking ship' heading for a total rout in the upcoming polls.

The Congress leader said the leaders and workers of the AAP and the BJP were influenced by the democratic functioning of his party under the dynamic leadership of Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi fighting to protect the Constitution, uphold democracy. He said the doors of Congress were always open to those who believed in the programmes and policies of the party. Former MP Udit Raj, AICC secretary in-charge of Delhi Danish Abrar, former Delhi Minister Narendra Nath and other party leaders were also present on the occasion.

Delhi Police embrace new criminal laws

AGRAJ PRATAP SINGH & RAHUL GAHLAWAT
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

The passing year was a transformative one for the Delhi police as it embraced the new criminal laws - Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Bharatiya Nagarika Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) replaced Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Bharatiya Sakshya Bill (BSB) replaced Indian Evidence Act (IEA). The year 2024 also witnessed several incidents that shook people, including the killing of a businessman while he was on a morning walk in east Delhi, the firing at the GTB hospital where miscreants entered the hospital ward and shot a person due to mistaken identity. Even the incident at an east Delhi child care centre which claimed lives of newborns was a result of criminal negligence, while the three civil services aspirants who died of drowning in a study centre's basement in the



month of July. However, the city also witnessed a little decrease in cases of crime against women, owing to a comprehensive set of measures initiated by the Delhi Police through a combination of technology and conventional methods. According to police data from January 1 to November 30, the cases of rape in the city declined by 10.36 per cent, from 2,141 cases in 2023 to 1,919 this year. Molestation cases also witnessed a drop by 19.10 per cent, that is from 2,345 in 2023 to 1,897 this year. Additionally, eve-teasing cases decreased by 9.97 per cent, from 381 in 2023 to 343

this year. Most notably, human trafficking cases plummeted by 42.37 per cent, from 59 in 2023 to just 34 this year. With the Delhi legislative assembly polls round the corner, the police have intensified efforts against illegal voters, and also deported illegally residing Bangladeshi immigrants. There has been a rise in cyber crime during the past year. Delhi police has been making people aware through various ways with regard to the ways cyber fraudsters approach gullible people. Meanwhile, this year also witnessed a series of hoax bomb threats that haunted the authorities, a problem

which still persists. On May 3, such threats were received by around 200 schools and institutions in the capital city. Many city hospitals and airports were also targeted in a similar fashion. During this period, questions were also raised about the functioning of the Delhi police. In the crackdown against the menace of drugs, the police on October 2 made one of the biggest drug hauls with the seizure of over 560 kilograms of cocaine estimated to be worth around Rs 2,000 crore from a warehouse in Mehrauli, South Delhi. Additionally, on October 18, around 200 kg of cocaine that belonged to the same syndicate was also seized from an unused shop in Ramesh Nagar area of west Delhi. Following this, a comprehensive operation against the drug peddlers was initiated on instructions from LG that continued till the end of the year, resulting in the arrest of several peddlers and seizure of drugs.

NDMC to host 'Suvidha Camp' on January 4

STATESMAN NEW SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

The New Delhi Municipal Council announced on Tuesday that it will organise its next 'Suvidha Camp' on January 4 to provide information, facilitation, and grievance redressal services for its stakeholders. The Suvidha Camp will take place from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. The civic body stated that helpdesks from various departments will facilitate and address grievances for service users, employees, Resident Welfare Associations, Market Traders' Associations, and residents. Departments participating in the camp include Public Health, Architecture and Environment, Commercial, Health Licensing, Property Tax, Education, Fire, Accounts/Finance/Pension, Medical Services, Parking Management, Chief Security Office, EBR Department, Municipal Housing, Vigilance, and Library.

THUMBNAILS



A child with his father on a cold winter afternoon at India Gate on Tuesday. SUBRATA DUTTA

SJVN signs MoU with Bihar govt for 1,000 MW Hathidah Durgawati PSP: SJVN has signed an MoU with the Bihar government for the development of the 1,000 MW Hathidah Durgawati Pumped Storage Project and other PSPs in Patna. A spokesperson for SJVN said here on Tuesday that Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha, Minister of Energy and Planning Development Department Bijendra Prasad Yadav, Minister of Industries and Tourism Nitish Mishra, and SJVN Chairman and Managing Director Raj Kumar Choudhary, along with other senior officers of SJVN, were present during the signing of the MoU. The MoU was signed by SJVN BDE General Manager Mukesh Kumar Sharma and Bihar government's Department of Industries Secretary Bandana Preyasi. The development of PSPs in Bihar will create direct and indirect employment for 5,000 persons and an investment of about Rs 10,000 crore, the spokesperson said.

5th edition of Sant Shiromani Surdas Mahotsav hosted: The Geetanjali International Foundation presented the 5th edition of the Sant Shiromani Surdas Mahotsav at India International Centre, New Delhi. This celebration paid tribute to the 16th-century Bhakti poet Sant Surdas, blending Indian classical dance and music to showcase the spiritual and artistic heritage of the revered saint. The Surdas Mahotsav was inaugurated by Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary, Cabinet Minister of the Uttar Pradesh Government. Mr Chaudhary said, "The Sant Shiromani Surdas Mahotsav is a testament to our rich spiritual and cultural legacy. Sant Surdas's timeless poetry reminds us of the profound devotion and love for Lord Krishna that continues to resonate across generations. Events like these not only preserve our traditions but also inspire younger generations to embrace the essence of Bhakti and art."

Punjab implements citizen-centric approach to deliver govt services

Patwaris, Sarpanches, Nambardars and MCs empowered to verify applications online, says Minister Aman

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 31 DECEMBER

To ensure efficient, honest, accountable and citizen-centric governance to the people of the state, Punjab Government has taken slew of ground-breaking initiatives to make the government services more accessible for every citizen and transform Punjab into a truly digitally empowered society.

Highlighting the details about the initiatives launched by the state government, Punjab Governance Reforms and Public Grievances Minister Aman Arora said that Punjab has recently launched a pioneering project that has enabled Sarpanchs, Nambardars and Municipal Councillors (MCs) to verify applications online for various certificates—Residence certificate,



Caste (SC, BC/OBC) certificate, Income certificate, EWS certificate, Old Age Pension and Dogra certificate.

Punjab takes the lead by launching this innovative initiative aims to save citizens from the hassle of making multiple visits to obtain signatures from

Sarpanchs, Nambardars and MCs. These local representatives will receive information via WhatsApp and can provide their recommendation through WhatsApp.

The Governance Reforms Department has also onboarded all the Patwaris to verify documents online, and as of now, over 9.20 lakh applications have been processed online by the Patwaris in the last seven months across the state, he added.

Allowing people to access services from the comfort of their homes, Aman Arora said that Punjab Government launched "Bhagwant Mann Sarkar- Tuhade Dwar" scheme to provide 43 citizen-centric services to the people at their doorstep. Citizens can book an appointment by just calling the helpline number 1076 to avail these 43 services, he said while

adding that citizens can conveniently schedule Doorstep Service Delivery appointments at their preferred time.

Seva Sahayaks are adhered to the scheduled appointments, visiting citizens' locations to facilitate service applications through tablets and collect necessary documents (if required). Certificates are being sent directly to their phones via SMS or WhatsApp. Over 1,11,915 appointments have been served.

The Governance Reforms Minister further said that Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann also launched the "AAP Di Sarkar, AAP De Dwar" scheme on February 6, 2024, wherein camps are being organised across the state. As many as 11,090 camps have been organised so far, wherein, as many as 50,046 grievances were resolved on the spot in these camps. The primary

purpose of the scheme is to facilitate people by providing services and resolution of grievances on the spot at the camps.

He further informed that the services pendency touched 0.3 per cent in month of this December, which is the lowest ever recorded pendency. Regular monitoring of pendency of Citizen Services is being ensured to accomplish the goal of zero pendency of citizen services.

Now, the people of Punjab do not need to visit any office or Sewa Kendra for collection of hard copies of certificates as Punjab Government has started delivery of digitally signed and QR coded certificates to citizens via SMS and email. These certificates are verifiable online and all the offices will accept the certificate. As on date, over 55,83,656 lakh documents have been delivered digitally.

Mayor's New Year feast a wasteful expenditure, says Raja Iqbal Singh



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

The Leader of the Opposition in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and former Mayor, Sardar Raja Iqbal Singh, on Tuesday criticised the New Year feast organised by the Mayor, calling it a wasteful expenditure and an act of insensitivity.

He alleged that the civic body owes crores in unpaid salaries and arrears to its employees, yet it is spending lakhs on a lunch party, which reflects the Mayor's insensitivity. He added that while the people of Delhi are suffering from increasing pollution and broken roads, AAP leaders seem more focused on hosting feasts.

Furthermore, Singh claimed that the MCD is grappling with a financial crisis, yet the Mayor continues to host lavish events, with the common people bearing the costs.

Highlighting the shortcomings of the civic body, Singh lamented that while garbage piles are scattered across the city, roads are in poor condition, and the recent rains have exposed the government's preparations, the Mayor is busy hosting a feast that reflects his audacity and indifference.

Amid urinal fee for men row, Shimla corporation withdraws decision

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 31 DECEMBER

Amid row over urinal fee for men in public toilets, the Shimla Municipal Corporation (SMC), revoked its decision.

The civic body's decision met with criticism after it was taken by it to charge Rs five from men using public urinals across the city. This backlash from the public and political circles left the civic body embarrassed and SMC Mayor Surinder Chauhan had to clarify in a media briefing on Tuesday that there would be no urinal charges for men.

He further stated that there is no intention to impose any urinal fee for men in near future. Chauhan clarified that the maintenance of the public toilets in Shimla was being managed by Sulab International for which the corporation was providing Rs 2.44 lakh per month for the services.

Farmers for MSP: SC grants time to Punjab to shift Dallewal to hospital

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted the Punjab government time until January 2, 2025, to comply with its December 20 order to provide medical aid and shift farmers' leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on a 'fast-unto-death' since November 26, to a hospital. Dallewal is on fast in support of agitating farmers' demands, which include legally guaranteed minimum support prices for agricultural produce.

Granting more time to the Punjab government, a vacation bench of Justice Surya Kant and Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia posted the matter for hearing on January 2, 2025, after Punjab's Advocate General Gur-



minder Singh sought more time for the compliance of the December 20 order.

Advocate General Gurminder Singh said an application has been filed seeking an additional three days to comply with the court's December 20 order to provide medical aid and hospitalisation for Dallewal.

The Advocate General further said that efforts to comply with the December 20 order were made by mobilising

around 7,000 security personnel at the protest site at the Khanauri border. However, due to the Punjab Bandh organised by farmers' organisations on Monday, there were traffic blockades and other hindrances.

The Advocate General informed the bench about the protesters' proposal that Dallewal would accept medical aid if the Centre was ready to talk to them.

"As per the negotiators,

the farmers have proposed to the central government that if they are invited for talks, then Dallewal is ready to receive medical aid as desired," the Advocate General said.

The bench then posted the contempt petition filed against the Punjab Chief Secretary and Director General of Police to January 2, 2025, for further hearing.

The top court said the Chief Secretary and DGP of Punjab will have to appear virtually on the next date of hearing.

Dallewal, the convener of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political), has been on a 'fast-unto-death' at the Khanauri border to pressure the Centre into accepting the farmers' demands, that include a legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

BJP MLAs stage sit-in protest over pending CAG reports

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

Delhi BJP MLAs under the leadership of Leader of Opposition in Assembly Vijender Gupta on Tuesday staged a sit-in protest at Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel's office, demanding a special session of the Assembly to present the 14 Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports.

During the sit-in, the opposition MLAs handed over a memorandum to the Speaker, insisting he direct the government to table the reports in the Assembly without further delay.

Attacking the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, Gupta said, "The government has crossed all limits of shamelessness by deliberately delaying the presentation of the 14 CAG reports in the Assembly



despite mounting pressure from all sides. This delay appears to be a desperate attempt to complete its tenure and conceal the corruption of the AAP hidden in these reports from the public."

Informing that the BJP legislative party had submitted a memorandum on 19th December over the matter, he said, "Today, the Opposition submitted another memorandum requesting the Speaker to call a special session of the

Assembly. The memorandum underlined that the CAG regularly audits government departments to ensure transparency, accountability, and an assessment of financial and administrative practices."

"Performing its duty, the CAG submitted audit reports of various government departments for 2017-18 to 2021-22 to the government. But, these reports have been pending with the government for the past two years and are yet to be tabled in the Assembly. Failure to do so not only violates the constitutional rights of the Assembly members but also undermines public trust, as citizens have the right to know how public funds are being utilized," Gupta said.

The Leader of Opposition asserted that the extensive delay in presenting these reports raises serious doubts about the government's intent.

Haryana sets one-year target to eliminate TB by Dec 2025

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 31 DECEMBER

Haryana Health Minister Kumari Arti Singh Rao has said that the campaign to eliminate TB from the state will run till March 25, 2025, and the target has been set to eliminate TB in one year by December 2025.

The Minister called upon the people to cooperate in the TB Eradication Campaign.

She said that the 100-day TB Mukta Campaign has been launched at the state level from December 7, 2024. She said that the present state government has set a target to eliminate TB from the state by December 2025.

The Minister informed that during this campaign, the team of the Health Department is identifying TB patients by going to every city and village in every district. In this, the patients diagnosed with TB are being provided tests and medicines free of cost under the government scheme.

The Health Minister said that the Department is making dedicated efforts to realize Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini's vision of TB-Mukta Haryana. She said that the medical officers of the state should not consider this campaign as just a duty but should work with full commitment.

She informed that under the Nikshay Poshan Yojana, the government also gives an incentive amount of Rs 1000 per month to TB patients till the treatment is over. Kumari Arti Singh Rao said that under this campaign, doctors should also encourage citizens to become Nikshay Mitra and give them information about the Nikshay portal.

The Health Minister has also appealed to the citizens of the state to come forward for health checkups under the TB-free campaign being run across the state. She said that the initial symptom of TB is cough. Coughing for more than two weeks, frequent sweating, fatigue, weight loss, difficulty in breathing, and fever are the main symptoms of TB.

Year ends on cold note; IMD predicts colder and foggy start to New Year

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

On the last day of the year, Delhi recorded the minimum temperature at 9.6 degrees Celsius while the weather department forecast cold and dense fog for the first day of the New Year.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) stated that the minimum temperature recorded at Palam stood at 8.3 degrees Celsius while the maximum temperature was recorded at 14.9 degrees Celsius at the same station.

Meanwhile, the fog and cold wave conditions are likely to continue over parts of northwest India during the next 24 hours which will improve thereafter as a wet spell is likely over Western Himalayan Region during next one week and over plains of northwest region on January 4 to 6, it added.

A satellite image shared by the weather department at 9:45 am showcased fog over



A view of Raisina Hills against the backdrop of the last sunset of 2024 on New Year's Eve in New Delhi on Tuesday. ANI

Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, South of Uttarakhand, Haryana and Delhi among others. As per the meteorological department, the minimum visibility at Safdarjung was recorded 1000 meters at 5:30 am while 1500

meters at Palam airport at 7 am.

On New Year's eve, people at Connaught Place were seen in layers of woolen clothes enjoying the passing year with enthusiasm and warmth despite the cold evening.

KIND ATTENTION

RESIDENT WELFARE ASSOCIATIONS/ BUILDERS/ PROJECT PROPONENTS/CITIZENS/NGOs

PROVIDE ELECTRIC HEATERS AND WARM CLOTHING TO SECURITY AND OTHER STAFF

AVOID OPEN BURNING AND AIR POLLUTION

Citizens are requested to:
Avoid open burning of biomass & solid waste
Do not use coal and wood for heating purpose

LET'S PROTECT OUR AIR TOGETHER !

Delhi Pollution Control Committee
https://dpcc.delhigovt.nic.in

Scan QR code to Download Green Delhi App

THUMBNAILS

K'taka cylinder blast: The death toll in the cylinder blast tragedy in Karnataka's Hubballi rose to eight as another victim succumbed to burn injuries on Tuesday morning. The victim has been identified as 42-year-old Prakash Barakera, a resident of Unakal in Hubballi. Treatment was ongoing for another young Ayyappa devotee, Vinayaka, at the Karnataka Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) in Hubballi. The seventh victim, 27-year-old Tejeshwar Saatara, a resident of Ramanagar, succumbed to his injuries on Monday night. Prakash Barakera's inconsolable two sisters stated that God had betrayed them by taking away their brother, who was like a father figure to them. "He had been going on the Sabarimala pilgrimage for 15 years. We spoke to him early in the morning, and we thought he would come back home. But by 6 a.m., he was gone," they said. A total of nine persons, all Ayyappa devotees, preparing for the Sabarimala pilgrimage, suffered severe burn injuries in the cylinder blast incident that occurred in Achchavva Colony in Hubballi. The other deceased individuals are Ajasamy, also known as Bepari (58), Sanjay Savadatti (19), Lingaraj Biranura (20), Raju Moger (16), Shankar Urbi (30), and Manjunath Wagmode (18). Among the eight deceased, five were the only children of their parents.

HC extends relief to KTR from arrest

High Court directed the ACB not to arrest him till the verdict was pronounced



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 31 DECEMBER

In a major relief to BRS working president KT Rama Rao, the Telangana High Court extended its interim orders and protected him from arrest in connection with the Formula E race case until the pronouncement of the verdict. Rao had approached the court with a petition to quash the FIR filed by the Anti-Corruption Bureau under the Prevention

of Corruption Act, against him. The court reserved its order on the criminal petition filed by the former minister.

Advocate General A Sudarshan Reddy raised questions on the legality of the agreement signed with the organizers of the Formula E race during the BRS regime. He pointed out that Rs 55 crore was disbursed without any authorization from the Finance Ministry, out of which Rs 46 crore was paid

in foreign currency, violating RBI rules. The Model Code of Conduct was in effect at that time due to elections in the state and Rao had signed the payment note as the minister of municipal administration and urban development (MAUD). He said the Governor had sanctioned proceedings against KTR on 17 December.

However, KTR's counsel Siddarth Dave counterargued that the case was politically motivated and devoid of

merit. He argued that the BRS leader had not personally benefited from the deal and there was no evidence of corruption in the case. He also said the FIR was registered hastily and no preliminary inquiry had been conducted. He sought the quashing of the FIR against Rao. After both parties concluded their arguments, the court reserved its judgment. However, it extended the protection given to Rao, directing the ACB not to arrest him till the verdict was pronounced.

The BRS leader has also been summoned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to appear before it on 7 January in connection with the same Formula E race case. The ED had sought the details of the FIR from the ACB. The central agency filed an enforcement case information report last week in the case under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) following the ACB's FIR against KTR. Rao yesterday said that unlike in other cases, ED was taking a more aggressive approach in this matter.

Karnataka BJP leaders conduct poster drive against Priyank Kharge; detained

AGENCIES
BENGALURU, 31 DECEMBER

The Karnataka Police detained BJP leaders on Tuesday in Bengaluru for carrying out a poster drive against state Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister, Priyank Kharge in connection with the contractor suicide case involving his close aide.

Speaking to the media at the BJP state office in Bengaluru, the Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council, Chalapathi Narayanaswamy demanded that the reasons behind deceased contractor Sachin Panchal's death must be determined through an investigation.

"The allegations of contract killing and honey trapping associated with the case are serious in nature. Names of individuals from Solapur, Maharashtra, have surfaced, making this an inter-state issue. Hence, the investigation must be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)," he demanded.

Narayanaswamy stated that Minister Priyank Kharge had taken this matter personally and challenged BJP and its leaders.

"No matter how much they shout or tear their clothes, I will not resign," Minister Kharge reportedly said.

Narayanaswamy questioned, "What does this mean? Does this imply that our fight has no value? Is asking for justice a mistake?"

He further alleged that Priyank Kharge's close associates were involved in the case.

"For this reason, do not take this matter personally. If allegations have been made against you, face them with courage and allow any type of investigation," he challenged Minister Kharge.

Narayanaswamy accused Priyank Kharge of being evasive and mocking the situation.

"Minister Kharge says, 'Give me the address of the protesters and tell me how many are coming; I will arrange tea and coffee for them.' If this is not arrogance, then what is it?" Narayanaswamy asked.

"Would anyone come to your house to form a relationship with you?" he questioned Kharge.

"We are not here to build relationships; it is our right and duty to question the wrongdoing that occurred when we are in the Opposition," he said.

He advised, "If you are unsure how to respond, seek guidance from others."

Headed, "Priyank Kharge seems to know everything about meddling in matters,

yet he doesn't seem to understand how to respond in this situation."

He emphasised that the BJP's demand for Minister Priyank Kharge's resignation was expressed through posters, similar to the way Kharge had acted earlier. "The decision is yours, but the fight will not stop," he warned.

Narayanaswamy stated that the case of Sachin's suicide as created a stir across the state. The issue has already reached the public. Minister Priyank Kharge's name has been mentioned in connection with the case, and not just the BJP but also Sachin's family is demanding a CBI investigation, he said.

He stated that BJP state president B.Y. Vijayendra, himself, and MLC Ravi Kumar had met the deceased's family. "When we visited, local leaders and MLAs from Congress, including the Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre, and the police were present. However, the family refused to let anyone from Congress enter their house," he said.

He added, "Under pressure, the minister eventually entered the house to have a discussion. However, when we visited, the family welcomed us wholeheartedly. This family is not involved in politics; they only want justice, nothing else."

Tamil Nadu govt cancels Smart Meter contract to Adani over pricing issue



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 31 DECEMBER

In a significant development, the Tamil Nadu government has cancelled global tender for smart meters procurement despite Adani Energy Solutions Ltd (AESL) being the lowest bidder. The Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Ltd, has cited the high cost exceeding its budget as the reason.

It is a victory for the anti-

the state-runt utility is planning to issue a fresh global tender for the smart meters. Installing smart meters is part of the Rs 19,000 crore project - Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme which excludes agricultural connections. The Union Government has offered a subsidy of Rs 900 per meter.

The Adani Group emerged as the lowest bidder for the package - 1 of the project, involving 82 lakh smart meters in 8 districts including Chennai. The tenders floated for three other packages also stand cancelled. Meanwhile, Arappor Iyakkam has called for a demonstration on January 5 in Chennai to highlight the corruption in the TN Electricity Board and Adani Groups' involvement. The anti corruption watchdog is spearheading a campaign to register an FIR in the coal import scam.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 31 DECEMBER

Continuing to keep the heat on the DMK government of MK Stalin over the sexual assault of a girl student in the prestigious Anna University, in the heart of Chennai, the BJP on Tuesday announced a padayatra from Madurai to press for justice for the victim.

"Condemning the atrocity meted out to the girl student and the DMK government attempting to prevent the full truth from coming out because the offender belongs to the DMK, the BJP Mahila Morcha will launch a padayatra from Madurai to Chennai on January 3," party state president K Annamalai said in a post on 'X'. The yatra would be led by state BJP Mahila Morcha President Umarathi and on its conclusion, a memorandum will be submitted to the Governor, he added.

Annamalai's novel protest of flogging himself six times

in front of his house last week to condemn the incident and deciding not to wear footwear till the DMK is ousted from power has only invited ridicule, flooding social media with memes.

Earlier on Monday, close on the heels of actor and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) President Vijay meeting Governor RN Ravi, Annamalai arrived at the Raj Bhavan, urging him to ensure a fair and impartial investigation into the sexual assault case.

Governor Ravi is also the Chancellor of Anna University, a highly reputed institution for technical education. The victim, a second year student of Mechanical Engineering, was sexually assaulted on the night of December 23 after her boyfriend was thrashed and chased away. On her complaint, police arrested the accused, Gnanasekaran (37), running a roadside biriyani shop near the varsity. His third wife is a conservancy worker in the varsity. During initial inquiry, the police are said to have found a cache of videos on unnatural sex.

The Madras High Court, which entrusted the investigation to a Special Investigation Team (SIT) of three women IPS officers, has ordered Rs 25 lakh compensation to the victim and also directed the university to provide free education and boarding. The court also rapped the police for the way the FIR was written, in a tone of blaming the victim and revealing the identity as well as family details. Further, it pulled up the city police for the FIR being leaked in the public domain. The opposition

AIADMK and the BJP as well as the Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK) of Seeman have been relentless in cornering the ruling DMK on the issue. Seeman was detained along with his supporters while holding a protest in Chennai earlier in the day.

AIADMK IT Wing members were also detained and cases registered against them for staging a protest demonstration in the city. This protest was in continuation of the AIADMK's state wide agitation. The AIADMK has christened the campaign "Who is that Sir" as the rape survivor had mentioned in her police complaint

that the accused received a call whom he addressed as sir. During the series of protests, party workers are holding placards 'Who is that Sir?' Countering the opposition onslaught, senior DMK Minister S Regupathy blamed them of playing cheap politics. "We will ensure speedy justice and there is no need for us to protect anyone. Tamil Nadu is the safest place for women. Even the NIC had clarified that the FIR was not leaked and that there was a technical issue that enabled some people to download it. It has been fixed shortly," he told the media.

Indian Navy marks key milestone with keellaying of third cadet training ship

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

The keel laying ceremony for the third Cadet Training Ship, Yard 18005, was held recently at the M/s L&T Shipyard in Kattupalli. The event was presided over by Rear Admiral Ravi Kumar Dingra, Flag Officer Tamil Nadu and Puducherry Area, alongside Rear Admiral G K Harish (Retd), Head of Shipbuilding Business at L&T, and other senior officials from both the Indian Navy and L&T.

This milestone comes after the signing of a contract on 7th March 2023 between the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and L&T for the indigenous design and construction of three Cadet Training Ships.

These vessels will play a pivotal role in providing at-sea training to officer cadets after their initial shore-based training. The ships will also extend their training facilities to cadets from friendly foreign countries, reinforcing India's growing role in regional defense cooperation.

The project marks another significant achievement in the Indian Navy's commitment to indigenous shipbuilding, aligning with the Government of India's vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat and the 'Make in India' initiative. The Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP 2012-27) envisions a fleet of three Cadet Training Ships, which will further enhance the Navy's capabilities to train the next generation of naval officers.

Controversies dominated year 2024 in Telangana

AGENCIES
HYDERABAD, 31 DECEMBER

From phone-tapping allegations to demolition of actor Nagarjuna's convention centre and from a Telangana minister's offensive comments on Naga Chaitanya-Samantha Ruth Prabhu's divorce to the arrest of actor Allu Arjun for a stampede at a theatre, controversies dominated 2024 in Telangana.

The Congress government's efforts to deliver on its poll promises, the Opposition's tirade over the government's failures, the Bharat Rashtra Samithi's struggle to bounce back after drawing a blank in the Lok Sabha elections and defections of its ten MLAs marked the year.

The arrest of BRS leader K. Kavitha by the Enforcement Directorate in the Delhi excise policy case, arrest of three serving and a retired police official on allegation of phone tapping during the BRS rule, probe into some of the alleged scams during the previous regime were among the key developments that made headlines during the year.

The Congress government, which was only a few days old when it entered 2024, got down to work.

Opposition BRS and BJP targeted it for going back on its poll promises including 36 guarantees, but the ruling party cited the Model Code of Conduct for Lok Sabha elections which had come into effect in March for the delay in implementation.

After losing power late last year, the BRS suffered humiliation as it failed to win even a single Lok Sabha seat.

With eight seats each, the Congress and BJP shared the honours while the AIMIM retained Hyderabad.

Making big inroads into the BRS strongholds, the BJP doubled its 2019 tally. The saffron party also finished runner-up in six other constituencies. This is BJP's best-ever performance in the state. The BJP, which won four seats in 2019 with a vote share of 19.5 per cent, improved its vote share to 35.08 per cent. This was a huge gain for the saffron party, which had polled 13.90 per cent votes in the November 2023 Assembly elections and won eight seats in the 119-member Assembly.

The Congress party, which was hoping to win 10-12 seats, could win only eight. The ruling party suffered defeat in not only Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's home district Mahabubnagar but also lost Malkajigiri, from where Revanth Reddy was elected to the Lok Sabha in the previous elections.

The Congress, which bagged three Lok Sabha seats in 2019 with a 30.2 per cent vote share, also increased its vote share to 40.10 per cent. In Assembly elections held in November 2023, the Congress party won 64 seats in the 119-member Assembly, with a 39.40 per cent vote share.

The BRS, which suffered

its worst-ever defeat since its inception in 2001, failed to retain a single out of nine Lok Sabha seats it won in 2019.

The KCR-led party, which had won 39 Assembly seats with a 37.35 per cent vote share, saw its vote share plummet to 16.68 per cent.

The party, which ruled the state for 10 years, suffered a series of setbacks with defection of several key leaders including 10 MLAs to the Congress party.

The year began on a bad note for the Opposition party as it lost its young MLA from Secunderabad Cantonment G. Lasya Nanditha in a road accident.

In the bye-elections held in May along with Lok Sabha polls, the BRS lost the seat to the Congress.

Ever since losing power, former chief minister and BRS president K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) has not stepped into the Assembly.

Frequent challenges thrown by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and the ruling party failed to bring the Leader of Opposition to the House.

Barring the Lok Sabha campaign, KCR was rarely seen in public, leaving the field for his son and BRS working president K.T. Rama Rao and nephew and senior leader T. Harish Rao.

KCR received a major setback in March with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) arresting his daughter and BRS MLC K. Kavitha in the Delhi excise policy case.

कार्यालय नगर निगम, पाली (राज.)
(पालिका नगरपालिका वडा नं. १, पाली, पोखरा-२०६००१)
टेलीफोन :- ०२२३२-२५००३३ ई-मेल :- crmpal@yaoo.co.in
क्रमांक प. १५/२०२४/१४९ दिनांक २६.१२.२०२४

ई-निविदा सूचना
नगर निगम पाली मे विद्युत कार्य हेतु ई-निविदा आमन्त्रित की गई है। निविदा सम्बन्धी जानकारी व अन्य कर्तव्य निर्देश कार्यालय एवं एन केबलटेल की वेबसाइट <http://eproc.raajasthan.gov.in> पर पोर्टल व <http://sppp.raajasthan.gov.in> के UBN नं. DLB2425SLRC13954 के जरिये देखी जा सकती है।
आयुक्त नगर निगम, पाली
राज. संख्या/की/२४/९७४७

NORTHERN RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM
Ref: i) Tender Notice No.: 03/2024-25 dated: 10.04.2024
ii) Tender No.: 15235293 due on 18.01.2025
1. In reference to above tender, the due date has been extended from 07.01.2025 to 18.03.2025
2. In reference to above tender, the pre bid conference meeting date has been re-fixed from 14.06.2024 to 29.01.2025.
3. In reference to above tender, 3 attached documents have been removed and 6 new documents have been attached.
All other terms & conditions remain unchanged.
The Corrigendum has been published on website www.ireps.gov.in.
3993/24

INDIAN RAILWAY CATERING AND TOURISM CORPORATION LTD.
(A Government of India Enterprise - Mini Ratna)
CIN : L24890DL1999GO101707

IRCTC Invites bids for the following:-

1. Open E-Tender 2025/IRCTC/NZ/FP/FFU/OpenTender/Jan25: For E-Tender cum Auction for setting up, Operation and Management of Fast Food Unit at following Railway Stations: Makrana=46.48 sqm. & Banaras=46.45 sqm. Date of Pre-bid meeting: 08.01.2025. Last date of submission: 21.01.2025 upto 15:00 hrs.

2. OPEN E-Tender No.: 2025/IRCTC/Catg./Refreshment Room/JAN/25 Open E-tender cum E-Auction Bid Document for Provision of Catering Services in Refreshment Rooms for a period of 5 years area of DLI=256.19 sqm. and NDLS=173.48 sqm. Date of Pre-bid meeting: 08.01.2025. Last date of submission 21.01.2025 upto 15:00 hrs.

3. OPEN E-Tender No.: 2025/IRCTC/Catg./JAN AAHAAR/JAN/2025: Open E-Tender cum E-Auction bid document for Provision of Catering Services in Jan Aahar for a period of 5 years DLI(A1)=118.32 sqm. Date of Pre-bid meeting: 08.01.2025. Last date of submission 21.01.2025 upto 15:00 hrs.

4. Open E-tenders for Provision of Onboard Catering Services in Trains, for a period of 5 years further extendable upto 2 years for a Cluster of Trains. Last date for submission and opening of the tenders 1st Phase on 21.01.2025 at 12:00 hrs. and 12:15 hrs. respectively & 2nd Phase on 04.02.2025 at 12:00 hrs. and 12:15 hrs. respectively.

5. Open E-Bid (Two packet bid) for Deployment of Food Safety Supervisors (FSS) and Lab Testing of Cooked Food and Raw Material, etc. for a period of one year, at 100 licensee kitchen units of IRCTC. The last date & time for submission and opening for Open E-Bid: Upto 20.01.2025 till 15:00 hrs. & on 20.01.2025 at 15:30 hrs. respectively. Pre bid meeting: 03.01.2025 at 12:00 hrs. though both Online (Video conferencing) and offline mode.

6. EOI for emplacement of advertising agency. Last date & time for submission: 03.02.2025 upto 12:00 hrs. (EOI document availability by 10.01.2025).

7. Open e-Tender No. 2024/IRCTC/EPR Compliance/2: Open e-Tender for Fulfillment of EPR compliance on behalf of IRCTC under Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016 as amended from time to time. Last Date & Time for online Submission of bid: 18.01.2025 upto 15:00 hrs.

8. Notice Invites Open E-Tender No.: IRCTC/RN/DG SETS/2024/RA Dt. 16.12.24. Open E-Tender cum Reverse auction for Supply, Installation and Commissioning of DG Sets at Rail Neer Plant Ambarnath (Maharashtra) and Danapur (Bihar). Last Date & Time of online Submission: 18.01.2025 upto 15:00 hrs.

For details visit www.irctc.com for 1-8, www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC for 1-7 and GeM Portal for 8. Document downloading & participation can be done on website: www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC for 1-7 and GeM Portal for 8.

In case of any corrigendum/addendum issued on the above advertisement, it will be published only on IRCTC's website www.irctc.com for 1-8, www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC for 1-7 and GeM Portal for 8.

Office Address: IRCTC, 11th Floor, Statesman House, B-148, Barakhamba Road, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001; Tel: 011-23311263-64; Fax: 011-23311259

TENDER

NORTHERN RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM
No: C-6/STBA/Policy-II/2018
The tender for the appointment of "Station Ticket Booking Agent" for NSG-4, NSG-5 & NSG-6 category stations in the jurisdiction of Northern Railway, Delhi Division is to be opened on 22.01.2025 at 15:10 hrs. Station Ticket Booking Agent (STBA) of NSG-4 and NSG-5 category stations i.e. Noli, Modinagar, Baraut and Patnaud Road respectively will be appointed for Night Shift only whereas for NSG-6 category stations STBA will be appointed for all shifts. All other terms and conditions will remain the same. 3992/2024

NORTHERN RAILWAY
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Name of Work and its location 30-Elect-58-T-2024-25-E3
Electrical work in connection with Repair of defective solar plant, solar water heater (SWH), solar pumps and stand-alone solar street light and CAMC of above plant over Delhi Division.
Approx. cost of the works in Rs. 207.08 lacs
Address of the office Sr. Divl Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.
Earnest Money Rs. 253600.00
Date & time of submission of tender 27.01.2025, 12:00 Hrs.
Opening of tender 27.01.2025, 12:00 Hrs.
Website & notice board www.ireps.gov.in & Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi
3991/2024

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LIMITED
(Regd. Office : PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001)
Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SCG033813 Website : www.pspcl.in (Phone No. : 01881-275289) E-Mail : se-hq-ggssp-ropar@pspcil.in

Press Tender (Short Term) Enq. No. 587/P-2/EMPW-12845 dated 24-12-2024 Dy. Chief Engineer/Headquarter (Procurement Cell-2)
GGSSPT, Rupnagar invites open **Press Tender** for Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of 'Digital Data Display Board' for online display of information related to pollutants level in 'air emission' of GGSSPT, PSPCL, Rupnagar.
For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://pspcil.in> from 26-12-2024 from 04:00 PM onwards.
Note :- Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <https://pspcil.in> **RTP-136/24**

DELHI TRANSCO LIMITED
NOTICE INVITING e-TENDERS
Delhi Transco Ltd (A Government of NCT of Delhi Undertaking) invites online tender, for the following work:
Tender No.T24R220414 : Design, Engineering , Supply, Laying, Jointing, Testing and Commissioning of 220kV D/C 1X1200sq. mm. U/G XLPE Cable from 220KV Dev Nagar substation to 220kV Subzimandi substation on turnkey Basis.
For complete details of the tender please visit following websites :-
<https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in> (Tender ID No. 2024_DTL_267515_1) www.dtl.gov.in with Unique No. DTL-9455-301224.
Last date for bid submission: 17.02.2025 at 1:30 PM.
All Corrigendum/Addendum/ Amendments/Date of Extension/ Clarifications, if any, to the above e-tenders would appear only on the above mentioned websites.



2024: India achieved breakthroughs in technologies, futuristic projects

India has been breaking barriers, from rolling out 5G networks to developing four Made-in-India COVID vaccines

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

The year 2024 has been one of incredible progress for India in both technology and medicine. From AI changing industries to major breakthroughs in nuclear energy, space exploration and quantum computing, it has indeed been a year to remember.

The story, however, goes back much further. India has been breaking barriers, from rolling out 5G networks to developing four Made-in-India COVID vaccines, not just for itself, but for the world. Today, the world is taking notice of India's spirit of innovation. With the third largest start-up ecosystem and a record 64,480 patent applications filed in 2023, India has firmly secured its spot as the sixth largest globally in patent filings.

A document released by the government highlights some of the significant breakthroughs and innovative projects that have been undertaken across various fields in 2024.

Powered by initiatives like the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) and Bulk



Drug Parks, India's pharmaceutical exports soared from over \$15 billion to about \$28 billion over the past decade ending FY24. Similarly, Biotechnology has also expanded 13-fold, from \$10 billion in 2014 to \$130 billion in 2024, targeting \$300 billion by 2030.

Thus, 2024 further cemented India's global healthcare leadership.

India developed its first indigenous antibiotic, Nafithromycin, a breakthrough against drug-resistant pneumonia with 10 times the efficacy with a three-day treatment regimen.

The country launched NexCAR19, its first home-grown CAR-T cell therapy for cancer.

Globally, India joined the Biopharmaceutical Alliance alongside South Korea, the US, Japan, and the EU to tackle drug supply shortages. India resumed local

Production of Penicillin G after 30 years, a milestone for making the pharmaceutical sector self-reliant.

Transformative reforms like Liberalised FDI, Positive Indigenisation Lists, and opening Defence R&D to industry and start-ups over the past decade propelled

indigenous production to record Rs 1.27 lakh crore and exports 30-fold in 2024.

As the year ends, India solidifies its position as a global defence leader, achieving historic milestones in strategic innovation.

Marking a significant advancement, DRDO successfully flight-tested the Agni-5 missile with MIRV technology under Mission Divyastra, placing India in an elite group of nations with advanced re-entry systems. The nuclear-capable K-4 submarine-launched ballistic missile was tested from INS Arihant, bolstering

India's underwater nuclear deterrence. With a 3,500 km strike range, it places India under a select group of nations. Showcasing the nation's ability to defend against 5,000 km-class ballistic threats, DRDO conducted successful trials of the Phase-2 Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) System.

India's nuclear power generation capacity doubled from 4,780 MW in 2014 to 8,180 MW in 2024. The government aims to triple this capacity to 22,480 MW by 2031-32, showcasing a strong commitment to expanding nuclear energy. Currently, India is one of the leading countries with well-advanced thorium utilisation technologies, developed indigenously. India's bio economy has experienced remarkable growth, skyrocketing from \$10 billion in 2014 to over \$130 billion in 2024.

With a bold vision to grow India's space economy to \$44 billion by 2033, including \$11 billion in exports, the government is determined to set new benchmarks in space exploration.

By driving innovation, spearheading ambitious missions, and building world-class infrastructure, India is

rapidly emerging as a dominant force on the global space frontier.

Over the past decade, India has been leveraging technology in various innovative ways to expedite infrastructure projects, significantly enhancing efficiency and reducing delays.

In 2024, India added significant strides in transforming its transport infrastructure, embracing futuristic technologies.

A major milestone was the completion of India's first Hyperloop test track at IIT Madras, advancing the nation's vision for high-speed rail travel. India took a major step in modernising road infrastructure by completing pilot studies for the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), which will enable a distance-based electronic tolling system.

The National Quantum Mission is propelling India toward global leadership in quantum technology, while BharatGen showcases the nation's commitment to developing AI tailored for India. In 2024, India made significant strides reinforcing its position in secure digital technologies and AI innovation.

Congress will continue to fight 'anti-constitutional' thinking of BJP-RSS: Kharge



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge Tuesday slammed the BJP and RSS over recent remarks of Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Babasaheb Ambedkar and alleged atrocities against Dalits and tribals in the saffron party ruled states including UP, saying his party will continue to fight the "anti-Constitutional" thinking of the BJP-RSS.

Kharge in a post on X wrote, "Union Home Minister Amit Shah insults Babasaheb Ambedkar in Parliament. The same anti-marginalised mentality is being repeated in the BJP-ruled states."

Replying during a debate in the Rajya Sabha marking the 75th anniversary of the Constitution's adoption, Shah in an attack on the Congress on 17th December said, "It has become a fashion to say Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar,

Ambedkar, Ambedkar'. If they had taken God's name so many times, they would have got a place in heaven."

Referring to recent incidents of alleged atrocities against the Dalits and tribals in the BJP-ruled states, he said, "In Madhya Pradesh's Dewas, a Dalit youth was killed in police custody. In Odisha's Balasore, tribal women were tied to a tree and beaten up... In UP's Muzaffarnagar, three Dalit families were forced to migrate because of caste-based attacks on them and the police remained silent." "It is well known that atrocities are being committed against Dalits, tribals, backward and minority communities under the anti-Constitutional rule of the Modi government.

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-I, DELHI
4TH FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001
TA NO 1418/2022
ICICI BANK LIMITED
VS.
MADHURI AND ANR.

To,
(1) MADHURI W/O ASHOK KUMAR SINGH, R/O H NO 2160/13, GALI NO 61, III RD, 60 FEET ROAD, MOLAR BAND, EXTN BADARPUR, DELHI-110044
(2) ASHOK KUMAR SINGH S/O SH, JAIRAM CHOUDHARY R/O H NO 2160/13, GALI NO 61, III, RD, 60 FEET ROAD, MOLAR BAND EXTN, BADARPUR SOUTH DELHI-110044

Whereas the above-named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 24,71,52,66 (Rupees Twenty-four Lakh Seventy-one Thousand Five Hundred Fifty-two And Sixty Six Paise Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before Ld. Registrar on 04.03.2025 at 10:30 A.M. 1st (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.tribunal.gov.in) Phone Number: 011-23748473. Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above mentioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence. All the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:-
(i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application/Software;
(ii) "Meeting ID" and "Password" for the next date of hearing call cases to be taken by Registrar/ Recovery Officer-I/ and Recovery Officer-II shall be available one day prior to the next date at DRT Official Portal i.e. "https://drt.gov.in" under the Public Notice Head;
(iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 011-23748473. Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 16th December, 2024.

By order of this Tribunal
Respondent may contact under mention Phone number for further enquiry.
Ld. Registrar
DRT-I, New Delhi.
Phone No: 011-23748473
Email: drt1delhi-dfs@nic.in

Cong slams BJP over Rane's Kerala remarks, demands his dismissal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

Senior Congress leader KC Venugopal on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on the BJP after Maharashtra Minister Nitesh Rane reportedly compared Kerala to "mini Pakistan", saying it shows that the saffron party has deep-rooted "animosity" for the people of the Southern state. He also demanded that Rane should be immediately sacked.

Reacting to Rane's remarks

on Kerala, Venugopal, who is also the Congress general secretary in-charge of Organisation, said, "From time to time, the BJP deploys its hate mongers to spew venom against Kerala. Using terms like 'mini Pakistan' shows they have deep-rooted animosity for the people of Kerala."

He said for the entire world, Kerala is a model state that has continuously topped the Human Development indices, especially on education, health-

care and overall standard of living. Pointing out that since millennia, Kerala has been a beacon of communal harmony and brotherhood among all religions and sects, the senior Congress leader asserted that to use abusive language for the land of Sree Narayana Guru, Chattampi Swamikal and Mahatma Ayyankali, who advocated for egalitarianism, inclusivity and social justice, shows the BJP's "disregard" for its own fellow citizens.

3.47 lakh houses sanctioned under PM-JANMAN till now

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

The generation of 196.30 crore person-days with a total Central release of Rs 7,491.29 crore, additional two crore rural houses to be constructed under PMAY-G, sanctioning of 3,47,424 houses under the PM-JANMAN as on date and 70,905 houses already been completed across the states and union territories are some of the main achievements

of the rural development department during this year.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA) is an Act to provide for the enhancement of livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

India 2024

- India's maiden solar mission, Aditya-L1, reaches final orbit, 1.5 million km from Earth, Jan 6
- PM Narendra Modi inaugurates the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya during the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony, Jan 22
- Nitish Kumar resigns as Bihar CM, ends alliance with RJD-Congress, and forms a new government with BJP-led NDA, Jan 28
- Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren arrested in a money laundering case, Jan 31; Champai Soren takes oath as the new CM, Feb 2
- SC strikes down the Electoral Bond Scheme as unconstitutional and violating the right to information, Feb 15
- India implements Citizenship Amendment Act, easing citizenship for persecuted minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, Mar 11
- Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal arrested by ED in excise policy case, Mar 21

India 2024

- Controversy erupts over alleged question paper leaks and result anomalies in NEET-UG medical entrance exam, June 4
- India's new criminal codes replace colonial-era laws, including the IPC, July 1
- Hemant Soren back as Jharkhand CM following release on bail, July 4
- About 120 killed in a stampede at a religious event in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh, July 2
- Anant Ambani marries Radhika Merchant in a lavish wedding, estimated at ₹5,000 crore, July 12
- At least 254 killed and 47 missing in Wyanad district landslides, Kerala, July 30
- Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina ousted, flees to India following violent protests, Aug 5
- Rape and murder of a 31-year-old trainee doctor in Kolkata sparks nationwide protests, Aug 9
- Tripura Peace Accord, signed between rebel groups and State and Central governments, ends 35-year insurgency, Sept 4
- Arvind Kejriwal, granted bail by SC on Sept 13, resigns as Delhi CM; Atishi Marlena takes over, Sept 21
- India recalls High Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Verma and expels Canadian diplomats as diplomatic row escalates over the investigation into Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing, Oct 14
- SC disallows demolitions of homes belonging to those accused of criminal offenses, Nov 13
- DRDO successfully tests the country's first long-range hypersonic missile, Nov 16

Electoral Outcomes at a Glance

Lok Sabha Polls

- India's seven-phase election, the world's largest electoral exercise, begins on Apr 19, culminating in a historic victory for the BJP-led NDA and Narendra Modi's swearing-in for a rare third consecutive term as Prime Minister on June 9

State Assemblies

Sikkim: SKM storms back to power; Prem Singh Tamang remains CM, June 10	Odisha: BJP secures majority, ending BJD's 24-year rule; Mohan Charan Majhi becomes CM, June 12	Jammu & Kashmir: National Conference-Congress alliance wins; Omar Abdullah sworn in as CM, Oct 16	Jharkhand: JMM-led alliance secures another term; Hemant Soren begins 4th term as CM, Nov 28
Andhra Pradesh: Big win for TDP; N Chandrababu Naidu takes over as CM, June 12	Arunachal Pradesh: BJP returns to power; Pema Khandu becomes CM for 3rd time, June 13	Haryana: BJP retains power for 3rd term; Nayab Saini becomes CM for 2nd time, Oct 17	Maharashtra: BJP-led Mahayuti wins landslide; Devendra Fadnis becomes CM, Dec 5

Sports

Tennis: Rohan Bopanna (43) and Matthew Ebden win the Australian Open Men's Doubles title, making Bopanna the oldest male doubles champion in Grand Slam history

Cricket: India ends an 11-year ICC trophy drought with a thrilling 7-run victory over South Africa to win the T20 World Cup

IPL: Kolkata Knight Riders defeat Sunrisers Hyderabad to claim the title

Paris Olympics 2024:

- India's Medal Tally: 6 (1 Silver, 5 Bronze)
- Neeraj Chopra: Silver in Javelin Throw, his second Olympic medal
- Manu Bhaker: First Indian to win two medals in a single Olympics—both bronze, one in 10m Air Pistol and another in Mixed Team 10m Air Pistol with Sarabjot Singh
- Swapnil Kusale: Bronze in 50m Rifle 3 Positions
- Aman Sehrawat: Bronze in Wrestling (57kg)
- Men's Hockey: Back-to-back bronze after Tokyo 2020

Paris Paralympics: Indian contingent wins a record-breaking 29 medals (7 Gold, 9 Silver, 13 Bronze)

Chess: Gukesh Dommaraju became the youngest undisputed World Chess Champion at 18, defeating defending champion Ding Liren of China

Deaths

- Manohar Joshi (Former Maharashtra CM, ex-Lok Sabha Speaker)
- Pankaj Udhas (Iconic ghazal singer)
- Anshuman Gaekwad (Former India cricketer and coach)
- Yamini Krishnamurthy (Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi legend)
- Buddhadheb Bhattacharjee (Former West Bengal CM)
- Natwar Singh (Former External Affairs Minister, senior Congress leader)
- AG Noorani (Eminent jurist, constitutional expert)
- Sitaram Yechury (CPI-M stalwart)
- Ratan Tata (Tata Sons chairman emeritus, industry icon)
- Rohit Bal (Celebrated fashion designer)
- Shashi Ruia (Industrialist, Essar Group co-founder)
- SM Krishna (Veteran politician, ex-Karnataka CM)
- Ustad Zakir Hussain (Tabla maestro)
- Om Prakash Chautala (Former Haryana CM)
- Shyam Benegal (Renowned filmmaker)
- Manmohan Singh (Former Prime Minister and distinguished economist)

KBK Infographics

यूको बैंक UCO BANK

UCO Bank, ZONAL OFFICE, RECOVERY DEPARTMENT, 5 PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001

EMPANELMENT OF INSOLVENCY PROFESSIONAL ENTITIES (IPEs)

Applications from eligible Individuals / Institutions / Agencies / LLP/ Companies etc. for "EMPANELMENT OF INSOLVENCY PROFESSIONAL ENTITIES (IPEs)" are invited at UCO Bank, Zonal Office, Recovery Department, 5, Parliament Street, Pandit Marg Area, New Delhi-110001 latest by 05:00 PM on 07/01/2025. For eligibility and other details, please drop a mail at: zonewdelhi.rec@ucobank.co.in

Date: 31.12.2024 Sd/- Zonal Manager, UCO Bank, New Delhi Zone

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI.

4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building Parliament Street New Delhi - 110001.

Notice under section 19(4) of the Recovery of Debts Due to Bank and Financial Institutions Act 1993 read with rule 12 & 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rule) 1993) in the matter of

OANO 490/2024
HDFC BANK LTD.

VERSUS

DATE: 18.12.2024
APPLICANT

JUPITER ENTERPRISES & ORS.
To, Defendant D1. Mrs. Babli Sharma W/o Santosh Sharma D-378 Gali No 8 Om Nagar Mihapur Ext South Delhi - 44

RESPONDENT

Whereas the above named applicant (s) has / have instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 1,32,28,858.68/- (Rupee One Crore Thirty Two Lakh Twenty Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty Eight And Sixty Eight Paise Only) against you and where as it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on 28.04.2025 At 11.00 A.M. Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence. All the matters will be taken up through video Conferencing or physical and for that purpose:- (i) All the Advocates/ Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application/ software. (ii) "Meeting ID" and Password for the date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Hon'ble Presiding Officer/ Registrar shall be displayed in the daily cause list itself at DRT Official Portal i.e. drt.gov.in (iii) In any exigency qua that the Advocate/Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 23748478. Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal this 18th day of Dec, 2024

By Order of the Tribunal,
Section Officer, DRT-II, DELHI.

Kind Attention Rail Passengers

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of all concerned that Northern Railway's new Time-Table will be effective from 01.01.2025. Some of the important Salient Features/details of new Time-Table 2025 are as under :-

- Change in Departure and Arrival time of trains at terminals. (104 trains) (Including Preponement/Postponement of time)
- Revise timings of Arrival of trains (140 trains)
- Speeding up of trains (144 trains)
- Terminal change (03 trains)
- Change in train number (Mail/Exp. trains) (34 trains)
- Change in station name (03 stations)
- Change in train name (06 trains)
- Change in days of run (01 train)
- Change in nomenclature of trains:- Super Fast to Mail (14 trains) and Mail/Express to Super Fast (08 trains)
- Route diversion of trains (04 trains)
- Raising of maximum permissible speed (03 trains)
- Introduction of new trains (28 trains)
- Extension of trains (21 trains)
- Increase in frequency (04 trains)
- Experimental stoppages (69 trains)

Passengers are advised that before commencing journey, kindly check the updated schedule through Rail Madad Helpline Number 139, NTES App, Indian Railway's Trains Enquiry website (<https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in>) or for further information please click on the below given link :-

https://nr.indianrailways.gov.in/view_section.jsp?fontColor=black&backgroundColor=LIGHTSTEELBLUE&lang=0&id=0,2,1706

Visit RailMadad website:-
www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in

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RailMadad Helpline No.: 139

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"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Bond Boom

The unprecedented rise in corporate debt fundraising by Indian companies in 2024 marks a transformative phase in the country’s financial landscape. As firms raised a record Rs 10,67,000 crore through bonds, it is evident that the corporate bond market is evolving into a reliable and efficient alternative to traditional bank financing. This trend not only highlights the growing maturity of India’s financial markets but also underscores the dynamic interplay between economic growth, regulatory shifts, and investor behaviour. One of the primary catalysts for this record-breaking year has been the yield on corporate bonds in the face of falling government bond yields. With the Reserve Bank of India signaling a rate cut in early 2025, borrowing costs are expected to dip further. This has encouraged firms to issue bonds, particularly long-term ones, to lock in lower rates. Another significant factor is the tightening of credit by banks. Challenges in deposit mobilisation and concerns about credit-deposit ratios have prompted lenders to moderate their credit growth. Consequently, corporates have turned to the bond market, which offers a more diversified and efficient source of funding. Moreover, the inclusion of Indian government bonds in global bond indices has created additional liquidity, freeing up domestic investors to explore corporate debt. This global recognition has had a ripple effect, increasing investor confidence and stimulating demand for high-quality bonds. A remarkable feature of 2024’s fundraising spree is the preference for long-term bonds. The issuance of bonds with maturities exceeding five years surged significantly, driven by strong demand from institutional investors such as insurers and pension funds. These entities, which manage long-term obligations, find such instruments particularly appealing. What makes this development even more promising is the increasing participation of smaller and mid-sized firms in the bond market, suggesting its democratisation. These companies, which traditionally relied on bank loans, are now able to tap into bond funding, gaining access to capital markets on competitive terms. This shift is fostering a more inclusive financial system where firms of varying sizes can benefit from India’s growing economic momentum. This shift is also indicative of a strategic alignment between corporate India’s financing needs and the long-term growth prospects of the economy. With nominal GDP growth projected, the demand for stable, long-term funding is likely to persist, further solidifying the bond market’s role as a cornerstone of corporate finance. The momentum in the corporate bond market is expected to sustain into 2025. Anticipated rate cuts and continued moderation in bank lending will likely drive further growth in bond issuances. However, this expansion brings with it a responsibility to uphold credit standards. A surge in issuances must be accompanied by rigorous credit assessments to maintain investor confidence and financial stability. This shift towards a vibrant bond market signals a maturing financial ecosystem capable of supporting India’s economic aspirations. By embracing this evolution, corporate India not only secures a diversified funding base but also strengthens its position in a globally interconnected financial landscape.

H1-B Dilemma

The H1-B visa debate has reignited, bringing to light the conflicting views on skilled immigration to the US among prominent figures and political factions. Tech billionaire Elon Musk, former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy, and President-elect Donald Trump are at the centre of this heated discourse, each shaping the conversation in distinct ways. Mr Musk, a vocal advocate for H1-B visas, recently escalated the controversy by threatening to “go to war on this issue the likes of which you can’t comprehend.” His fiery defence of the programme stemmed from personal and professional stakes ~ he himself immigrated to the US and attributes much of his success, as well as the growth of his companies, SpaceX and Tesla, to the contributions of H1-B visa holders. Mr Musk has argued that the programme is indispensable for attracting top-tier talent, especially in fields like artificial intelligence and engineering. However, he has since tempered his tone, acknowledging criticisms of the system’s misuse and proposing reforms to address them. Mr Musk’s suggestion to raise the minimum salary for H1-B workers and impose annual costs on employers could make it prohibitively expensive for Silicon Valley to hire foreign workers over Americans, signaling a shift towards addressing the programme’s vulnerabilities. Mr Ramaswamy, another staunch defender of skilled immigration, has emphasised the economic and innovative benefits of H1-B visas. He has argued that the programme’s meritocratic foundation should be preserved, ensuring that only the most qualified individuals are granted access. However, his critique of American culture ~ claiming it undervalues intellectual achievement in favour of athletic prowess ~ has drawn mixed reactions. While his rhetoric underscores the importance of skilled immigration, it also points to broader societal challenges, such as the need to elevate STEM education and workforce development in the US. Mr Trump’s position on the H1-B programme reflects his broader balancing act on immigration policy. During his first administration, he tightened restrictions on the programme. His latest remarks suggest an approach backing the programme while advocating for reforms that prioritise American workers. Mr Trump’s evolving stance underscores the political complexities of the issue, as he seeks to reconcile the economic benefits of skilled immigration with the nationalist leanings of his MAGA base. The H1-B debate has also exposed rifts within conservative circles, particularly among hardliners who view the programme as exploitative. Critics argue that companies use H1-B visas to hire cheaper foreign labour, placing American workers at a disadvantage. Mr Musk’s acknowledgment of these concerns, along with his call for reforms, highlights the need for a balanced approach that addresses systemic flaws without undermining innovation. Ultimately, the path forward requires thoughtful reform. By ensuring that the H1-B programme serves its intended purpose ~ attracting top global talent while protecting domestic workers ~ the US can maintain its competitive edge and uphold principles of fairness and opportunity.

Swadeshi turns 120

‘Bengal united is a power; Bengal divided will pull in several different ways. That is perfectly true and is one of the merits of the scheme,’ wrote HH Risley in one of his notes on 6 December 1904. ‘The only rejoinder that I can think of is that Bengal is very densely populated; that Eastern Bengal is the most populated portion, that it needs room for expansion and that it can only expand towards the East. So far from hindering national development we are really giving it greater scope, and enabling Bengal to absorb Assam,’ added the civil servant who had contributed immensely to ethnographic studies on India. These words, often quoted in different contexts, attained a degree of notoriety.

News headlines from Bangladesh, and the diverse reactions in India and other countries, are not only disturbing and distressing, but also disquieting as they bode ill for developments in South-east Asian politics. The promising dawn of the ‘century of Asia’ seems to be eclipsed in the dark shadows of violence. Bangladesh, liberated in 1971 with the help of the Indian Army, is at the crossroads of history facing the harsh realities of civilian-Army politics, ethnic clashes, bloodshed and social turmoil across its otherwise serene riverine countryside.

In the new year of 2025, it pays to recall the sub-continent’s historic Swadeshi movement and the heights it reached in 1905: also, an opportune moment to pay homage to heroes of the movement, 120 years after their singular and often spectacular achievements. It is also an eye-opener to the shaping of nationalist thought and action which brought together some of the finest, bravest, boldest Indians when the decision to partition Bengal was implemented by the British Raj in 1905. The unity demonstrated in 1905 could serve as a lesson of history today.

Years before Prof Sumit Sarkar of Delhi University wrote the epic ‘The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908’, his address during the Indian History Congress in 1970 sought a deeper understanding of the nature and working of imperialism, both in India and on a world scale. His address was titled ‘Imperialism and Nationalist Thought’; it was focused on Bengal while acknowledging equally significant political and social developments in Maharashtra and Punjab.

The *Swadeshi* movement had gained momentum ostensibly as a reaction to what seemed as a territorial reorganization of the Bengal Presidency. The undivided province had an area of 189,000 square miles and a population (in 1901) of 78.50 million. The plan of the British Raj was to separate the largely Muslim areas of the eastern areas from the predominantly Hindu areas in the west. Lord Curzon, then the Viceroy of India, forged this imperial plan to make West Bengal for Hindus and East Bengal for Muslims. What it triggered was an upsurge of different movements against the British Raj: *Swadeshi* had multiple strands, different voices and diverse trajectories all adding up to anti-colonial, anti-imperial struggles which took the British Raj by surprise.

Prof Sarkar pointed out, “Continuities at first sight seem more noticeable than breaks when we look at *Swadeshi* Bengal from the ‘moderate nationalism’ point of view, and more specifically its political aspects which had crystallized around concrete grievances like government jobs and Council seats, issues directly affecting only a handful..Partition was an affront to the growing sense of unity among the Bengali-speaking people, a sense by no means all-pervasive but still certainly affecting



Swadeshi Movement

ting many others besides zamindars, Calcutta lawyers or Congress politicians; the high-handed redrawing of maps by foreigners without any consultation with the inhabitants was resented as a peculiar gross kind of white arrogance and racial discrimination was the theme which could unite the proudest zamindar or ‘bhadralok’ with the meanest of plebians.” The professor referred to a spectrum of Indian newspapers continually focusing on cases of assault and judicial partiality, and the depth of bitterness amongst the people. The original Risley Scheme, explained Prof Sarkar, would lead to the transferred East Bengal districts getting submerged in ‘backward’ Assam and losing several privileges including its Legislative Council and a

Board of Revenue; the enlarged Partition plan would restrict employment opportunities for its people, reduce educational facilities by cutting off Calcutta from East Bengal. It would also curtail the jurisdiction of the Calcutta High Court, at the same time upsetting the Permanent Settlement as the new province of East Bengal would require new taxes. Civil servants like H H Risley had convinced themselves that the whole *Swadeshi* movement was being engineered by interest groups led by the ‘bhadralok’, and were consequently supremely confident that “the native will quickly become accustomed to the new conditions”.

“Bengal united is a power; Bengal divided will pull in several different ways. That is perfectly true and is one of the merits of the scheme,” wrote Risley in one of his notes on 6 December 1904. “The only rejoinder that I can think of is that Bengal is very densely populated; that Eastern Bengal is the most populated portion, that it needs rooms for expansion and that it can only expand towards the East. So far from hindering national development we are really giving it greater scope, and enabling Bengal to absorb Assam,” wrote the civil servant who had contributed immensely to ethnographic studies on India. These

words, often quoted in different contexts, attained a degree of notoriety. What spurred Lord Curzon on was pretty obviously a political motive. Prof Sarkar quoted letters and notes from the Curzon papers, “The Bengalis, who like to think themselves a nation, and who dream of a future when the English will have been turned out and a Bengali *Babu* will be installed in Government House, Calcutta, of course bitterly resent any disruption that will be likely to interfere with the realization of this dream. If we are weak enough to yield to their clamour now, we shall not be able to dismember or reduce Bengal again; and you will be cementing and solidifying, on the eastern flank of India, a force already formidable, and certain to be a source of increasing trouble in the future.”

Lord Minto’s memorandum dated 5 February 1906 was equally significant to note when he observed: “Yet partition should and must be maintained, since the diminution of the power of the Bengali political agitation will assist to remove a serious cause for anxiety...It is the growing power of a population with great intellectual gifts and a talent for making itself heard, a population which, though it is very far from representing the more manly characteristics of the many races of India, is not unlikely to influence public opinion at home most mischievously. Therefore, from a political point of view alone, putting aside the administrative difficulties of the old province, I believe partition to have been very necessary...” Minto’s notes and memos are not merely part of India’s administrative history but have added immensely to the social-cultural identity of the Bengalis, then and now.

In the context of current political turmoil, it is often overlooked that these eastern parts of India’s subcontinent have historical legacies that stretch back centuries. The entire Bengal region during the thousand years preceding the British conquest had enjoyed long periods of autonomy and unity centred successively around Gaur, Dacca

and Murshidabad. The social historian in Prof Sarkar has shown how the memories of such feudal independence and the undoubted facts of linguistic and literary unity, led to the emergence of something like a common culture at the village level based on an amalgam of Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and primitive folk elements.

“On this came to be superimposed the more obvious unity of the English-educated *bhadralok* and its greatest creation ~ the nineteenth-century Bengali literature. Calcutta had become the real metropolis for the whole of Bengal, attracting students from all districts, sending out its graduates to teach in mufassil colleges and far-flung village schools, serving as the apex of the whole legal system and profession, and functioning also as the centre of trade by railway, river and ocean. Districts like Dacca, Barisal, Comilla or Mymensingh responded eagerly to impulses of social reform or political activity originating in Calcutta,” wrote Prof Sarkar in ‘The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal’ for the benefit of those attempting to comprehend the complexity of India’s socio-cultural ethos. The sense of unity demonstrated by Bengali-speaking people during the Swadeshi movement from 1903 to 1908 clearly could not be reduced to merely a few decades of political activities. With 1905 being the watershed year for the *Swadeshi* movement, Prof Sarkar identified five strands in what was clearly categorized as ‘economic swadeshi’: 1) organisation of technical education and industrial research; 2) promotion of swadeshi sales through exhibitions, shops and cost-price hawking by volunteers; 3) fostering and revival of traditional indigenous crafts; 4) starting of new industries based on modern techniques, and 5) floating of swadeshi banks, insurance companies and inland shipping concerns.

The spirit of *Swadeshi* was soon manifested through economic activities with a patriotic component: Kishorilal Mukherji’s Sibur Iron Works and Prafullachandra Ray’s Bengal Chemicals showed the way. The popularity of their enterprises made the *Swadeshi* movement present a panacea for all the ills of India: industrial devastation, economic drain and growing unemployment. In fact, Ray explained the motives behind setting up of Bengal Chemicals: “Our educated young men, the moment they came out of their colleges, were on the look out for a situation or a soft job under the Government, or failing that in a European mercantile firm. The professions were becoming overcrowded. A few came out of the Engineering College, but they were helpless seekers after jobs...What to do with all these young men? How to bring bread to the mouths of the ill-fed, famished young men of the middle classes?” Despite the passage of 120 years, the basic causes of social-political unrest and turmoil in the subcontinent remain quite the same.

Viet Nam's defence diplomacy

In the 1980s, Viet Nam began demobilising its forces and modernising its military, prioritising the navy and air force. By the 1990s, Viet Nam entered an unprecedented era of peace, expanding economic and diplomatic relations while reducing its military footprint. A significant milestone was its election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2008-2009, where it played an active role in addressing global challenges, including the promotion of Resolution 1889 on women and girls in post-conflict settings.

In 2014, Viet Nam made its first direct contribution to UN peacekeeping, gradually expanding its involvement by deploying medical and engineering units. By 2024, over 1,000 Vietnamese personnel will have served in UN missions, reflecting a significant expansion of the VPA’s traditional roles and enhancing Viet Nam’s international profile.

Viet Nam’s involvement in UN peacekeeping began modestly, with two officers deployed to South Sudan in June 2014. This cautious start allowed Viet Nam to gain experience in peacekeeping operations. By 2017, Viet Nam expanded its commitment, sending officers to the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

The turning point came in 2018, when Viet Nam deployed its first Level-

Việt Nam News

2 military hospital with 63 staff to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. This marked its first large-scale deployment in a peacekeeping operation, offering medical care to civilians affected by conflict.

In 2022, Viet Nam increased its engagement by deploying an engineering unit to the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei. This unit undertook critical infrastructure projects, including road repairs, school construction, and water well drilling, directly benefiting local communities.

By September 2024, Viet Nam had 291 personnel deployed in various peacekeeping roles, including military observers, trainers, and communications specialists. Notably, Viet Nam consistently exceeds UN benchmarks for the inclusion of women in its peacekeeping forces, showcasing its commitment to gender equality in international missions.

These efforts have earned Viet Nam widespread recognition from UN officials, including the Secretary-General and other senior leaders. Its decade-long peacekeeping contributions highlight Viet Nam’s dedication to promoting stability and humanitarian values on a global scale.

The end of the Cold War brought new security challenges, such as disaster relief, countering piracy, and combating transnational crime. These issues spurred the growth of multilateral defence frameworks like the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM), and ADMM-Plus, fostering closer cooperation among member states.

Viet Nam has actively embraced this trend by establishing defence attaché networks with 42 countries and participating in international military education programs. Vietnamese officers regularly attend staff colleges in countries like Australia, and foreign military personnel are hosted at Viet Nam’s National Defence University.

In peacekeeping, Viet Nam collaborates with regional and global partners to enhance its capabilities. For example, the Viet Nam Department of Peacekeeping Operations was accredited by the UN in 2018 as one of four training centres in the Asia-Pacific under the Trilateral Partnership Program.

IN MEMORIAM

SEAL AMAR KUMAR — It’s been 25 years! Yet your thoughts transcend time. Fondly missed. — Ila & Bhaskar.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Middle-class

SIR, As the new year approaches, salaried employees are likely to face significant tax deductions from their salaries for the financial year 2024-2025.

While taxes are deducted throughout the year, the months leading up to March 2025 will see an increased burden, further aggravating the financial challenges of India’s middle class. Reduced take-home pay diminishes purchasing power, leading to decreased spending by the salaried class, which, in turn, impacts the economy.

Considering these chal-

lenges, the government is reportedly exploring measures to boost consumer spending. One such measure under consideration for the 2025-2026 budget is to make personal income up to Rs 15 lakh per annum tax-free.

If implemented, this decision would provide significant relief to India’s middle class and stimulate demand for consumer goods.

Currently, the middle class faces immense financial pressure due to economic slowdown and rising living costs.

Taxation is currently gov-

erned by two systems: the old tax regime (OTR) and the new tax regime (NTR). A reduction in tax liability would particularly benefit salaried employees, increasing their disposable income. This would lead to higher consumer spending, ultimately helping the economy recover from its slowdown.

For the financial stability and growth of middle-class families, a decision to make personal income up to Rs 15 lakh per annum tax-free is crucial. This would play a vital role in ensuring better financial planning and stability for the middle class.

Yours, etc.,
Dattaprasad Shirodkar,
Ponda, Goa, 30 December.

LAUDABLE

SIR, Apropos the report “After 21-day, three-state escapee, runaway Zeenat captured”, published on 30 December in The Statesman, it was surely a matter of relief that the three-year-old tigress Zeenat ~ which escaped from the Similipal Tiger Reserve of Odisha and covered hundreds of kilometers through the forests of Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal for three weeks ~ was captured by foresters in Bankura on Sunday after tranquillising her. The way forest department employees tirelessly worked for Zeenat’s safety as she many times came very close to human habitats and also successfully completed the rescue is laudable.



Yours, etc., Sourish Misra,
Kolkata, 30 December.



A giant among men

AMAL CHANDRA

In an age of political theatrics and grandstanding, Dr. Manmohan Singh was an anomaly. A leader of few words but profound actions, his life—now etched in the annals of Indian history—was defined by a quiet resolve that reshaped the destiny of a nation. As India mourns his passing, we reflect not just on the milestones he achieved, but on the rare quality of leadership he embodied: one grounded in integrity, intellect, and an unwavering sense of duty.

Dr. Singh's rise to prominence was anything but conventional. Born in the village of Gah in present-day Pakistan, he was a child of Partition. The experience of displacement and hardship instilled in him a quiet strength that would serve as his compass through the corridors of power. He would often recount, not with bitterness but with perspective, the challenges faced by millions like him who were forced to rebuild their lives from scratch. His was a story of resilience—a boy who walked miles to school, rising through sheer merit to become one of India's foremost economists, and eventually, its Prime Minister.

The defining chapter of his career arrived in 1991 when India stood on the brink of an economic abyss. As Finance Minister in P.V. Narasimha Rao's cabinet, Dr. Singh inherited a country crippled by debt and stagnation. The decision to dismantle the protectionist barriers that had defined India's post-independence economic model was not an easy one. Critics lambasted him, warning of the social upheaval such reforms could bring. But Dr. Singh's conviction was unshakable. Liberalization, he believed, was not just about economic growth—it was about unleashing India's potential, creating jobs, and

fostering entrepreneurship. "No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come," he declared in Parliament, ushering in an era of transformation.

That moment alone would have secured his place in history. However, Dr. Singh's contribution extended far beyond the reforms of 1991. As Prime Minister from 2004 to 2014, he championed a vision of inclusive growth. Programmes like MNREGA, which guaranteed rural employment, and the Right to Information Act, which empowered citizens to demand accountability, were not mere policy measures—they were instruments of social justice. His government's push for universal food security and expanded healthcare access through NRHM reflected his belief that economic progress must touch the lives of the most vulnerable.

His handling of foreign affairs was equally transformative. The India-US Nuclear Deal, a landmark in strategic diplomacy, ended decades of nuclear isolation and secured India's long-term energy needs. In steering this contentious agreement through a fragmented Parliament, Dr. Singh displayed a rare blend of diplomacy and resolve. His statement during the debate—"I would rather go down than be seen as someone who compromised the nation's future"—revealed the steely core beneath his gentle exterior.

Yet, for all his achievements, Dr. Singh remained a paradox in Indian politics. His detractors painted him as a reluctant politician, a man overshadowed by the Congress Party's inner circle. It was an easy narrative to craft, given his soft-spoken demeanour and aversion to public confrontation. But those who worked alongside him knew better. Dr. Singh was never driven by the pursuit of



power. He saw politics as an extension of public service—a means to effect meaningful change. His relationship with Sonia Gandhi, often the subject of media speculation, was in fact a partnership grounded in mutual respect. He understood the limits of his authority within the party, but never allowed them to dictate his conscience.

Even his critics could not deny his integrity. In an era marred by corruption scandals and political opportunism, Dr. Singh stood apart. His lifestyle was austere, almost monastic. He derived no personal wealth or

privilege from his time in office. This authenticity resonated deeply with ordinary Indians, even as political opponents tried to frame him as a figurehead.

The 2014 general election, which saw the Congress routed at the polls, marked the end of his premiership. Dr. Singh, true to form, accepted the verdict with humility. "I have done my duty to the best of my ability," he said in his farewell address. There was no bitterness, no attempt to deflect responsibility. His tenure ended not with fanfare, but with the quiet dignity that had defined his career.

In the years that followed, Dr. Singh retreated from public life, returning to his first love—academia and writing. Yet, his voice remained influential. When India faced economic or diplomatic challenges, his insights were sought, and his words carried the weight of experience and wisdom. Until he retired from the Rajya Sabha in 2024, he continued to serve the nation in ways both visible and unseen.

On a personal level, those who met him speak of a man who carried his achievements lightly. His interactions were marked by warmth and humility. A personal anecdote comes to mind: when I met Dr. Singh to share a manuscript I had been working on, he greeted me not as a journalist, but as a fellow seeker of knowledge. His health had begun to falter, but his mind remained sharp. He could not read the entire draft, but his encouragement lingered long after our meeting ended.

Dr. Singh's passing leaves a void that is hard to fill. India has lost not just a former Prime Minister, but a moral anchor—a leader who navigated the nation through some of its most challenging times with grace and integrity. His legacy, however, endures. The institutions he strengthened, the reforms he championed, and the values he upheld will continue to shape India's journey.

As we say goodbye to Dr. Singh, we do so with gratitude. He may not have sought the limelight, but his impact is woven into the very fabric of modern India. In the truest sense, his life was a reminder that leadership is not measured by volume, but by vision. And in that regard, Dr. Manmohan Singh was a giant among men.

(The writer is an author, policy analyst and columnist.)

Undying commitment to human rights

RICHARD HARGY

In December 1978, Jimmy Carter – who has died aged 100 – outlined his belief that American strategic decisions abroad should be shaped by an adherence to human rights. "Human rights is the soul of our foreign policy ... because human rights is the soul of our sense of nationhood."

In the sphere of foreign affairs, Jimmy Carter's one term as US president (1977-1981) had some notable achievements. The most significant was the 1978 Camp David accords. Carter, Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin, and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat signed an agreement that saw Begin agree to relinquish the entire Sinai Peninsula, captured by Israel in the 1967 six-day war, in exchange for peace and full diplomatic relations with Egypt.

This exemplified Carter's belief in the power of American diplomacy and why US presidents should courageously assume the difficult task of peace-making.

Twenty-five years later, and against the backdrop of the build-up to the second Gulf war, Carter was recognised for his role in the accords and awarded the 2002 Nobel peace prize. The Nobel committee said that while President George W. Bush was planning an invasion of Iraq: "former President Jimmy Carter was awarded the Peace Prize for undertaking peace negotiations, campaigning for human rights, and working for social welfare".

They added that the prize was in recognition of "his decades of untiring

effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development".

On leaving office in January 1981, Carter sought to use his status as a former president to engage in the issues and causes that mattered to him most. He established the Carter Center to pursue his own course of personal diplomacy. Starting in 1982, the centre has monitored more than 110 elections in 39 countries.

Ahead of the 2020 US presidential election and as then president Donald Trump refused to commit to a peaceful transition should he lose, the Carter Center took the extraordinary step of designating the US as a "backsliding" democracy.

Carter, a devout Christian, maximised his personal relationships with former world leaders to promote democracy and human rights, support scientific work on eliminating diseases, and to mediate where possible to prevent conflict. His activism was not always appreciated by some of his White House successors, both Republican and Democrat. Randall Balmer, professor of religion at Dartmouth College, said that the former president's personal brand of diplomacy could often complicate and even contradict contemporary US diplomatic initiatives.

Carter was a member of The Elders, an independent group of global leaders working on peace promotion, social justice, climate change and global human rights. During his years of active membership Carter

dedicated significant energy to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, visiting the region on a number of occasions to support the Elders' work.

In the early 1990s the former president became involved in mediation work between the US State Department and several rogue states including North Korea and Libya. In 1994, Carter supported the US government's diplomatic efforts to resolve an increasingly tense nuclear weapons' situation with North Korean leader Kim Il Sung. Carter met with Kim in June 1994, becoming the first former US president to visit the country. The trip laid the groundwork for an eventual bilateral deal between North Korea and the US. The agreement saw North Korea pledge to freeze its plutonium weapons programme, while the US agreed to offer aid.

Carter continued to weigh-in on contemporary geopolitical events well into his 90s. He was openly critical when Trump announced in May 2018 that he was withdrawing the US from the Iran nuclear agreement, which had been negotiated by the Obama administration in 2015. He called Trump's move a "serious mistake". Carter felt that an international agreement made by an American president needed to be binding on all their successors and that by walking away from the Iran deal the US was signalling a "message to North Korea that if the United States signs an agreement, it may or may not be honored".

One of Carter's major accomplishments since leaving office was his centre's work in health care, and specifically the eradication of Guinea-



worm disease. This is a parasitic infection caused by drinking contaminated water. The consequences of the illness, while not fatal, can incapacitate the sufferer and lead to permanent disability.

The Carter Center committed to training over 100,000 village-based health care workers, invested in education programmes and provided water filters to protect people from swallowing the parasite. The results have been highly successful. According to the centre: "incidences of Guinea-worm disease have been reduced from an estimated 3.5 million in 1986 to 13 in 2023,

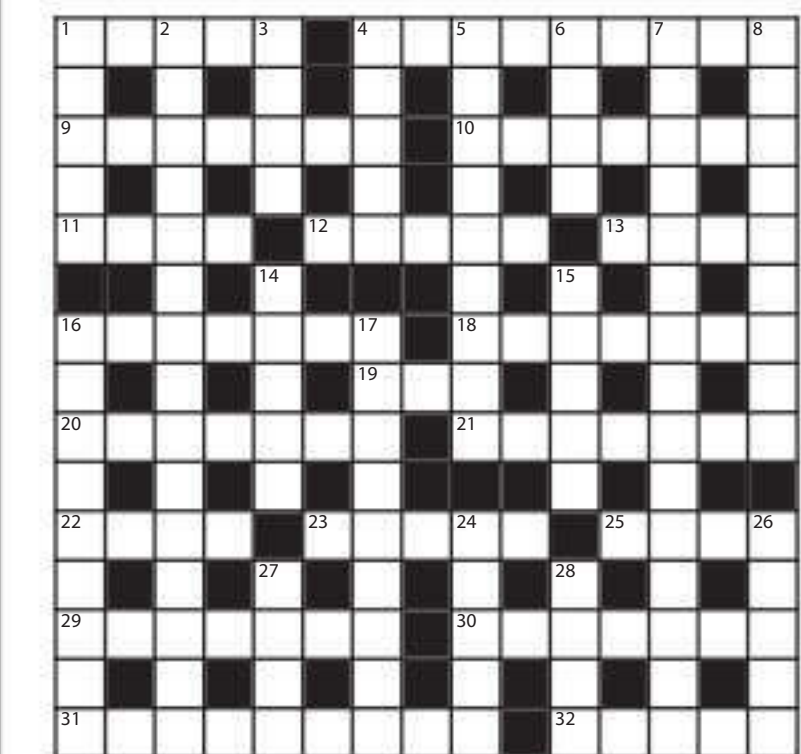
with the disease being eliminated in 17 countries".

Jimmy Carter's commitment to human rights never went away and his concept of a human-rights focused foreign policy has become permanently encoded in the global conversation. The former president's work brought him international acclaim, and illustrated why the nation's leaders should reject short-sighted calculations that risk the US being complicit in human rights violations.

(The writer is Visiting Research Fellow in International Studies, Queen's University Belfast. This article was published on www.theconversation.com)

CROSSWORD

NO-293007



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

CHESS TUBTHUMP
O I P W E O I
GUINEAFOWL WOLF
S E R L L I
LEAD MORAYFIRTH
I E E N A
WATERS CATEGORY
P R A T I O T
PRECINCT MALLIAN
ROYALJELLY BUMP
C M A G E U
SKIP MASQUERADE
E O E O N A D
STANDS IN PLAYS

ACROSS

- Division of supermarket is into drink (5)
- Puzzling clue for 3 riders found here (5,4)
- Transfer a stolen design for spout (7)
- English tend to provide for universal support (7)
- Watershed moment? (4)
- Trustworthy channel (5)
- Worry frequently with French and ... (4)
- ... Saunders essentially going on second after

- support is rejected – it's famously hard (7)
- One's usually needed to learn Jennifer's missing first half (7)
- Ultimately we cull musk deer (3)
- Wasp, perhaps, to hover next to drink (3,4)
- Discontented servant not opening drawer to get plate with design (7)
- Regularly visit hectic hotel to eat out (4)
- Small farm regularly pursuing credit (5)
- Flag is recognised international symbol for starters (4)

- I disapprove of that list – revealing quality of some online searches (7)
- Expedition travelling west in khaki kit – no knapsacks (3,4)
- Came with clubs over diamonds – profit not unknown – could spades help make your fortune here? (9)
- Danger of a laundry detergent completely fading a little shirt (5)

DOWN

- Modern day teacher's computer accessory (3-2)

- Improper accessory? Hold on, teachers work here (9,6)
- Bonnie Langford's style (4)
- Band search round (5)
- Sing with old partner on the radio, wearing these? (4,5)
- Liberal politician avoiding hail and whirlwind (4)
- Broadcast cunning horror film with Queen and Prince of Wales, say (8-7)
- Shocking treatment following heartless email, just lost millions of voters (9)

- Attempt to change eel's gender (5)
- Deduce where American goes to generate terror (5)
- You can pack it with cooked bagel dough on top (6,3)
- Submission of study describing free movement about Europe (9)
- Simulated attack's outside, on board Iron Duke (5)
- Small farm's peaceful (5)
- Worker gets fine for complaint (4)
- Retrospectively criticises game (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

100 YEARS AGO

(NEWS ITEMS)

DAWN OF THE NEW YEAR

CALCUTTA SCENES

BRILLIANT BALL AT BELVEDERE

CALCUTTA ushered out 1924 and welcomed the New Year in a spirit of unalloyed gaiety.

In addition to the ball at Belvedere, a brilliant function attended by upwards of 1,000 guests of Their Excellencies the Viceroy and Countess of Reading, all the city's places of entertainment received a degree of patronage that in some cases was almost embarrassing. Even the recent Christmas festivities were surpassed.

Fancy dress was de rigueur for the Belvedere Ball, an array of costumes of wonderful variety and originality presenting a dazzling spectacle. Animated scenes marked the arrival of the New Year.

The presence of Sir Harry Lauder at the Empire Theatre afforded the city's Scotsmen—and many others of equally demonstrative temperament—the opportunity of bringing in the year in true Scottish, fashion. On the stroke of twelve, Sir Harry, who had been delighting his huge audience for over an hour struck up "A Guid New Year tae ane an 'a'", followed by "Auld Lang Syne," in which the whole theatre joined with a will, standing with joined hands. The curtain finally rang down with everyone on the best of terms with his neighbour, stranger or friend. Several of the more ebullient spirits produced unsuspected bottles of the national beverage, and were accorded no lack of support in their potations.

"Full house" boards were displayed outside the Palais de Danse long before the event of the night, a fancy dress ball, was due to commence. So great was the crush that the gates were eventually closed against the disappointed throng outside. A crowded floor, however, did not deter the dancers from making the most of the occasion. With five minutes of the old year still to elapse, the dancing stopped and the dancers formed a large circle. The twelve strokes of the hour were struck on a huge gong, and Father Time came on the scene. "Auld Lang Syne" was sung, and then the band struck up "Rule Britannia," which was the signal for the appearance of Britannia, impersonated by Miss Crosby.

Messrs. Firpo had a crowd of over 600 to cope with, an excellent dinner being followed by a revel from which the dancers extracted the maximum of enjoyment. "Auld Lang Syne" was sung with great verve when the New Year arrived. Scenes of equal enthusiasm were witnessed at Peliti's.

The Grand Hotel ball-room also accommodated a very large crowd, and spirits ran high throughout.

Dinner parties at the various hotels and restaurants, were a feature of the earlier festivities. There were also many private parties.

FRANCE'S CURRENCY

GOVERNMENT AGAINST INFLATION

PARIS, DEC. 31.

THE senate has approved of an agreement between the State and the Banque de France, adopted by the Chamber yesterday, providing for the repayment by Government of advances amounting to 23,200 million francs, of which 1,200 million francs will be paid on January 1, which will be partially met from the proceeds of the hundred million dollar loan recently issued in America, and also for further payments of two milliard francs annually.

In the course of the debate M. Clementel, Finance Minister, said the Government was absolutely decided against inflation, France had reached the limit, and any decline in the value of the franc and further depreciation must be avoided at all costs. He added that the Government did not contemplate the issue of a new franc. The Government must do its utmost to develop France's productive capacity, while diminishing purchases abroad.

NAVAL TOUR

VISIT TO THE TAJ MAHAL

AGRA, DEC. 31.

A PARTY from the naval vessels now in Calcutta arrived here yesterday. They were conveyed in motor lorries to the Akbar Barracks and from there to Fatepur Sikri, where they dined and returned to Agra at 3 P.M. At 4-30 P.M., they visited the Taj Mahal. There was a dance at the Agra Club for the officers and entertainments for other ratings. At 9 A.M., to-day they visited the historical wing of Agra Fort and Sikan-dra. At 4 P.M., there will be a hockey match at the Agra Club—Navy v. Army.

To-night the officers and petty officers will be the guests of the sergeants, 2nd Battalion. Somerset L. I. at their annual New Year's ball. For seaman ratings there will be a concert and cinema at the Regimental Theatre.



New Zealand's Auckland welcomes the new year 2025 with fireworks

Countries in the South Pacific Ocean are the first to ring in the New Year, with midnight in New Zealand striking 18 hours before the ball drop in Times Square in New York

AGENCIES
WELLINGTON, 31 DECEMBER

Auckland has become the first major city to welcome 2025, with thousands of revelers counting down to the new year and cheering at colorful fireworks launched from New Zealand's tallest structure, Sky Tower, and a spectacular downtown light show.

Thousands also thronged to downtown or climbed the city's ring of volcanic peaks for a fireworks vantage point, and a light display recognizing Auckland's Indigenous tribes. It follows a year marked by protests over M ori rights in the nation of 5 million.

Countries in the South Pacific Ocean are the first to ring in the New Year, with midnight in New Zealand



striking 18 hours before the ball drop in Times Square in New York. Other cities around the world are readying with celebrations highlighting local cultures and traditions, after a year roiled by ongoing conflict and political instability.

In Australia, more than 1 million people are now expected at Sydney Harbour for the traditional fireworks.

The upcoming Year of the Snake in the Asian zodiac is heralded as one of rebirth — alluding to the reptile's sheddingskin. Stores in Japan, which observes the zodiac cycle from January. 1, have been selling tiny figures of smiling snakes and other snake-themed products. Other places in Asia will start marking the Year of the Snake later, with the Lunar New Year.

In South Korea, celebrations were cut back or canceled as the country observes a period of national mourning following the Sunday crash of a Jeju Air flight at Muan that killed 179 people.

New Year celebrations in Jakarta will feature a dazzling fireworks display, including a drone show featuring 800 drones, followed by countdowns to midnight at the

city's iconic Hotel Indonesia Roundabout. Chinese state media covered an exchange of New Year's greetings between leader Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin in a reminder of growing closeness between two leaders who face tensions with the West.

Xi told Putin that their countries will "always move forward hand in hand," the official Xinhua News Agency said Tuesday.

China has maintained ties and robust trade with Russia since the latter invaded Ukraine in 2022, helping to offset Western sanctions and attempts to isolate Putin. New Year's celebrations are likely to be subdued in Israel as its war with Hamas in Gaza grinds through a 15th month and scores of hostages remain in captivity.

Russia launched an aerial attack on Ukraine on Tuesday, striking the capital and other regions with multiple missiles and drones.

Ukraine's air force reported a ballistic missile threat at 3:00 am. (0100 GMT), with at least two explosions heard in Kyiv minutes later. Another missile alert was issued at 8:00 am, followed by at least one explosion in the city.

Missile debris fell in the Darnytskyi district of the capital with no reports of casualties or damage, the local administration said. Authorities in the north-eastern Sumy region reported strikes near the city of Shostka, where the mayor, Mykola Noha, said 12 residential buildings had been damaged as well as two educational facilities. He said some "social infrastructure objects" were destroyed, without providing detail. The air force also reported missiles and drones

Russian missile, drone attack on Ukraine hits multiple targets, including Kyiv

AGENCIES
KYIV, 31 DECEMBER



targeting several other regions of Ukraine.

In Moscow, the Russian Defense Ministry said that its forces successfully struck a Ukrainian air base and a gunpowder factory.

Around half of Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been destroyed during the war, and rolling electricity blackouts are common and widespread. Kyiv's Western allies have provided air defense systems to help Ukraine protect critical infrastructure, but Russia has sought to overwhelm its air defenses with combined strikes involving large numbers of missiles

and drones.

Russian attacks come as uncertainty looms over the course of the nearly three-year conflict. U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, who takes office next month, has vowed to end the war and has thrown into doubt whether vital U.S. military support for Kyiv will continue.

On Monday, President Joe Biden announced that the United States will send an additional \$2.5 billion in weapons to Ukraine as his administration works quickly to spend all the money it has available to help Kyiv fight off Russia before Trump takes office.

'No heating, no light': Moldovans fear looming energy shortage as Russia halts gas supplies

AGENCIES
CHISINAU, 31 DECEMBER



On a frigid morning in Moldova's capital, 39-year-old postal worker Petru Murzin braces for a difficult winter as he fears a looming energy shortage could leave many Moldovans with "no heating, no light."

His concerns aren't unfounded.

On 1 January, Russia's state-owned energy giant Gazprom is set to halt gas supplies to the European Union candidate country over an alleged \$709 million debt for past supplies, a figure fiercely disputed by Moldova's pro-Western government, that has accused Moscow of

weaponizing energy as a political tool to destabilize the country.

"I feel that we've entered a crisis that is quite difficult to resolve ... which worries me greatly," Murzin told *The Associated Press* in Chisinau. "Price increases are one thing, but when there is no gas at all, that's something entirely different."

The cessation will stop gas flowing to the Kuciurgan power plant, the country's largest,

which is situated in the separatist pro-Russian Transnistria region. The gas-operated plant generates electricity that powers a significant portion of Moldova proper.

"There will be no heating, no light," Murzin added. "We are entering a very difficult year."

Transnistria, which broke away after a short war in 1992 and is not recognized by most countries, also declared its own state of emergency earlier this month, fearing the region will not receive gas supplies. A large majority of Transnistria's 470,000 people speak Russian as their first language and some 200,000 are Russian citizens.

South Korean court issues warrants to detain impeached President Yoon and search his office

AGENCIES
SEOUL, 31 DECEMBER

A South Korean court issued warrants Tuesday to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol and search his office and residence over allegations of rebellion in connection with his short-lived declaration of martial law.

It's the first time a warrant has been issued to detain a sitting South Korean president. But experts say there is little chance of detention or searches unless Yoon is formally removed from office. The Seoul Western District Court issued warrants to detain Yoon and to search



the presidential office and residence in central Seoul, according to a statement from the Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, which is leading a joint investigation with

police and military authorities.

The agency says it's been investigating whether Yoon's 3 December declaration amounted to rebellion.

Under South Korean law,

the leader of a rebellion can face the death penalty or life imprisonment if convicted. Yoon has presidential immunity from most criminal prosecutions, but the privilege does not extend to allegations of rebellion or treason.

Yoon's powers have been suspended since the opposition-controlled National Assembly voted to impeach him on 14 December over his imposition of martial law, during which hundreds of troops and police officers were deployed at the assembly. By law, a president in South Korea is allowed to declare martial law only during wartime or similar emer-

gencies and has no right to suspend parliament's operations even under martial law.

Yoon has argued his decree was a legitimate act of governance, calling it a warning to the main liberal opposition Democratic Party — which he has called "a monster" and "anti-state forces" — that has used its legislative majority to impeach top officials, undermine the government's budget, and which he claims sympathizes with North Korea.

The Constitutional Court is to determine whether to dismiss Yoon as president or reinstate him.

Jimmy Carter: Many evolutions for a centenarian 'citizen of the world'

AGENCIES
PLAINS, 31 DECEMBER



Newly married and sworn as a Naval officer, Jimmy Carter left his tiny hometown in 1946 hoping to climb the ranks and see the world.

Less than a decade later, the death of his father and namesake, a merchant farmer and local politician who went by "Mr. Earl," prompted the submariner and his wife, Rosalynn, to return to the rural life of Plains, Georgia, they thought they'd escaped.

The lieutenant never would be an admiral. Instead, he became commander in chief. Years after his presidency ended in humbling defeat, he would add a Nobel Peace

Prize, awarded not for his White House accomplishments but "for his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development."

The life of James Earl Carter Jr., the 39th and longest-lived U.S. president, ended Sunday at the age of 100 where it began: Plains, the town of 600 that fueled his political rise, welcomed him after his fall and sustained him during 40 years of service

that redefined what it means to be a former president.

With the stubborn confidence of an engineer and an optimism rooted in his Baptist faith, Carter described his motivations in politics and beyond in the same way: an almost missionary zeal to solve problems and improve lives.

Carter was raised amid racism, abject poverty and hard rural living — realities that shaped both his deliberate politics and emphasis on human rights.

"He always felt a responsibility to help people," said Jill Stuckey, a longtime friend of Carter's in Plains. "And when he couldn't make change wherever he was, he

decided he had to go higher." Carter's path, a mix of happenstance and calculation, pitted moral imperatives against political pragmatism; and it defied typical labels of American politics, especially caricatures of one-term presidents as failures.

"We shouldn't judge presidents by how popular they are in their day. That's a very narrow way of assessing them," Carter biographer Jonathan Alter told *The Associated Press*. "We should judge them by how they changed the country and the world for the better. On that score, Jimmy Carter is not in the first rank of American presidents, but he stands up quite well."

'Chinese hackers accessed workstations, documents in 'major' cyber incident'

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, 31 DECEMBER



Chinese hackers remotely accessed several U.S. Treasury Department workstations and unclassified documents after compromising a third-party software service provider, the agency said Monday.

The department did not provide details on how many workstations had been accessed or what sort of documents the hackers may have obtained, but it said in a letter to lawmakers revealing the breach that "at this time there is no evidence indicating the threat actor has continued

access to Treasury information." The hack was being investigated as a "major cybersecurity incident," it added.

"Treasury takes very seriously all threats against our systems, and the data it holds," a department spokesperson said in a separate statement. "Over the last four years, Treasury has

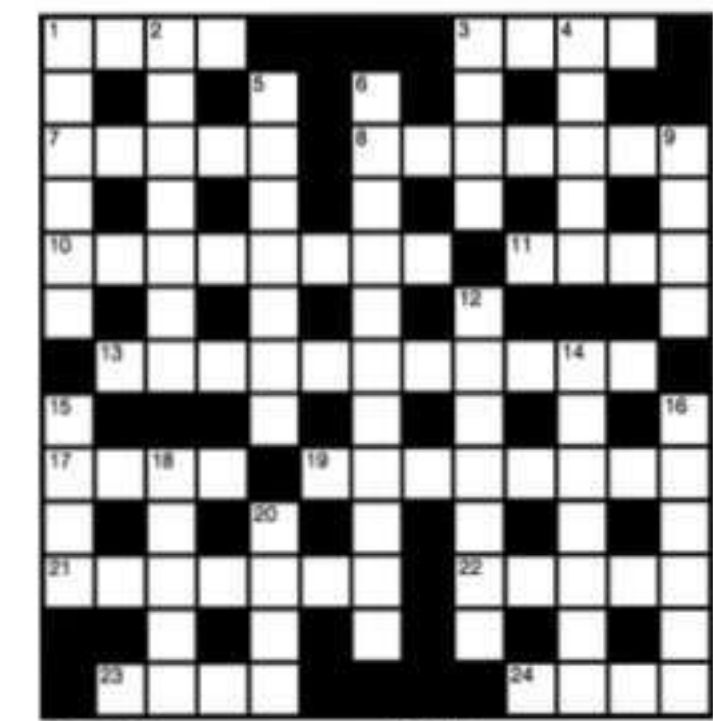
significantly bolstered its cyber defense, and we will continue to work with both private and public sector partners to protect our financial system from threat actors."

In Beijing, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson gave China's standard response to hacking allegations.

"We have repeatedly stated our position on such groundless accusations that lack evidence," Mao Ning said at a daily briefing. "China consistently opposes all forms of hacking, and we are even more opposed to the dissemination of false information against China for political purposes."

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Celestial body (4)
3 Upper-class person (Informal) (4)
7 Move (5)
8 Sloping letters (7)
10 Stretch (8)
11 Make eyes at (4)
13 Tryst (11)
17 Too (4)
19 Exercise weight (8)
21 Evil (7)
22 Depart (5)
23 Retained (4)
24 Depend (4)

DOWN
1 Wept (6)
2 Difficult and tiring (7)
3 Snare (4)
4 Throw (5)
5 Flightless bird (7)
6 Make out (11)
9 Appear (4)
12 Bristly growth (7)
14 Intimidate (7)
15 Ready money (4)
16 Somnolent (6)
18 Sharp point (5)
20 Mislead (4)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD
ACROSS
1 Ewe, 3 Nick, 5 Horn (Unicorn), 7 Pirates, 9 Onset, 11 Cash-and-carry.
DOWN
12 Philosopher, 16 Unacceptable, 18 Expert, 20 Anger, 21 Spectre, 22 Dray, 24 Hut, 13 Handgun, 14 Pottery, 15 Defect, 17 Curb, 18 Botch, 19 Pact.

By arrangement with The Independent
Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

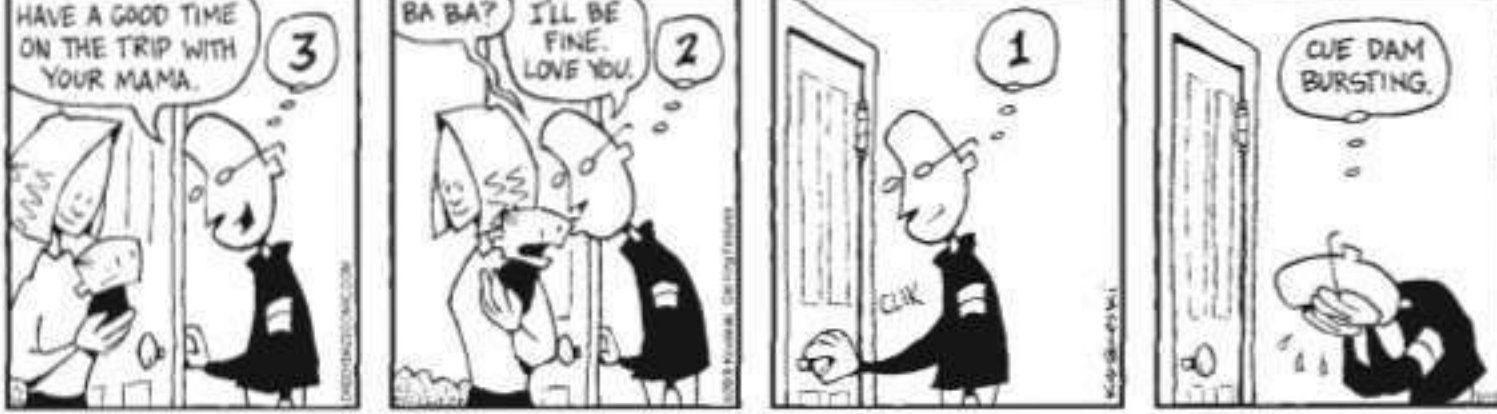
BETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovalski

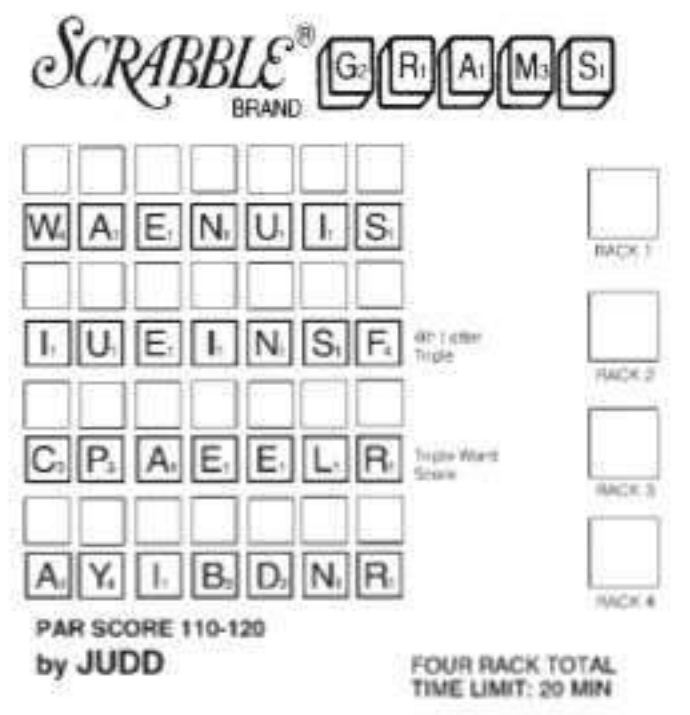


NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS
» AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
» Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
» Vidyaagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
» Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29558747
» Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
» Guru Tegh Bahadur 22586262, 22585007

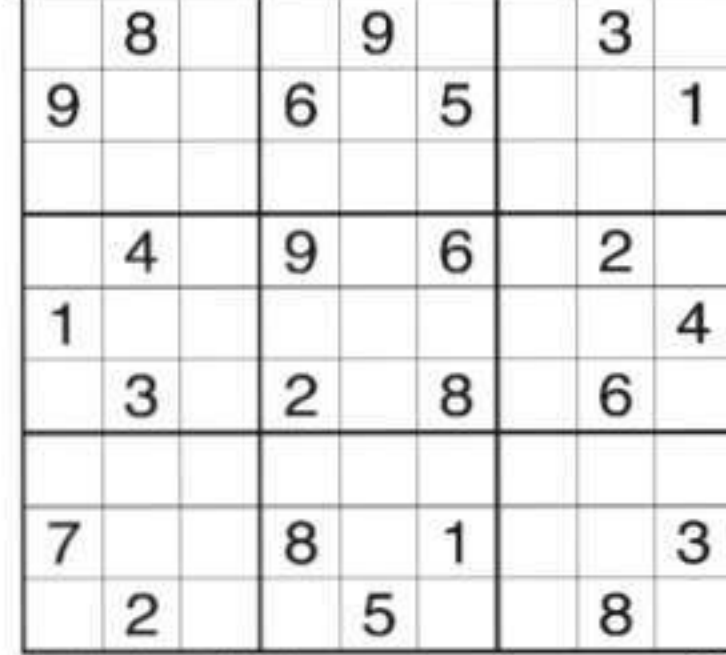
RAILWAY INQUIRY
General Inquiry 139
» Toll Free Nos. 1800112511
» SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY
» ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
» Haryana Roadways 23861262
» Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23325320



SCRABBLE BRAND
PAR SCORE 110-120
by JUDD
FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

SUDOKU



Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green
Difficulty Level ★★★
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that no row, no column and no 3x3 box contains the same number. The difficulty level increases through the week.

THUMBNAILS

NPCI removes UPI user onboarding limit for WhatsApp Pay: The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) on Tuesday removed the unified payments interface (UPI) user onboarding limit for WhatsApp Pay with immediate effect. With this, WhatsApp Pay can now extend UPI services to its entire user base in India, the NPCI said in a statement. Previously, the NPCI had permitted WhatsApp Pay to expand its UPI user base in a phased manner, lifting the previous cap of 100 million users. With this notification, the NPCI is removing the limit restrictions on user onboarding on WhatsApp Pay. "WhatsApp Pay shall continue to comply with all existing UPI guidelines and circulars applicable to existing third-party app providers (TPAPs)," said the corporation. According to third-party data, the Meta-owned platform has over 500 million users in India. The NPCI move heralds a significant shift in regulatory policy, which had previously limited WhatsApp Payment's rollout. Additionally, the NPCI has deferred a proposed rule to cap any single app's UPI transaction share at 30 per cent until December 31, 2026

Market witnesses mixed trend on final trading day

About 2239 shares advanced, 1571 shares declined, 97 shares were unchanged



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER:

Benchmark indices showed a mixed trend on Tuesday, the final trading day of 2024. Gains in pharma, PSU banks, and oil and gas stocks provided some relief. At close, Sensex was down 109.12 points or 0.14 per cent at 78,139.01, and the Nifty was up 13.25 points or 0.06 per cent at 23,644.80.

Mid and small-cap indices outperformed as the BSE Midcap index climbed 0.13 per cent while the BSE Smallcap index rose 0.71 per cent. On Nifty, the gainers were Bharat Electronics (2.90 per cent), Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (2.84 per cent), Kotak Mahindra Bank (2.61 per cent), Trent (2.43 per cent), Coal India (1.65 per cent). While on the losing side were Adani Enterprises (2.46 per cent), Tech Mahindra (1.99 per cent), Tata Consultancy Services (1.54 per cent), Infosys (1.36 per cent), Shriram Finance (1.02 per

cent). Among the sectors, healthcare emerged as the top performer soaring 41 per cent while the pharma and real estate posted stellar gains of 39 per cent and 33 per cent. Nifty Media struggled shedding nearly 25 per cent while the Nifty Bank index lagged the benchmarks with a modest 5 per cent. Nifty IT and Nifty Auto indices powered ahead, both climbing over 20 per cent. Among the individual stocks, Shriram Properties shares saw a 4 per cent surge following the company's

announcement of the strategic sale of a 3.9-acre land parcel in Chennai. Shares of Tata Chemicals Ltd, Gujarat Heavy Chemicals gained as the government announced minimum import price for soda ash. RVNL shares advanced nearly 8 per cent in the morning session after it was declared the lowest bidder for two projects. Zomato shares declined despite reports that Mag-icpin, the hyper-local e-commerce firm backed by the online food delivery giant. Adani Wilmar shares fell nearly 7 per cent, a day after the Adani Enterprises announced plan to exit the JV with Singapore's Wilmar International. The India VIX, a gauge of market volatility, rose 3.5 per cent to 14.47. The strengthening dollar continued to weigh on emerging markets like India, while investors held their bets amid feeble hopes of a deep US Fed rate cut next year. Market's focus is expected to shift back to domestic Q3 results for insights into potential growth and earnings recovery and to the Union budget.

Oil and gas industry set for long-term benefits with digitalisation: Report

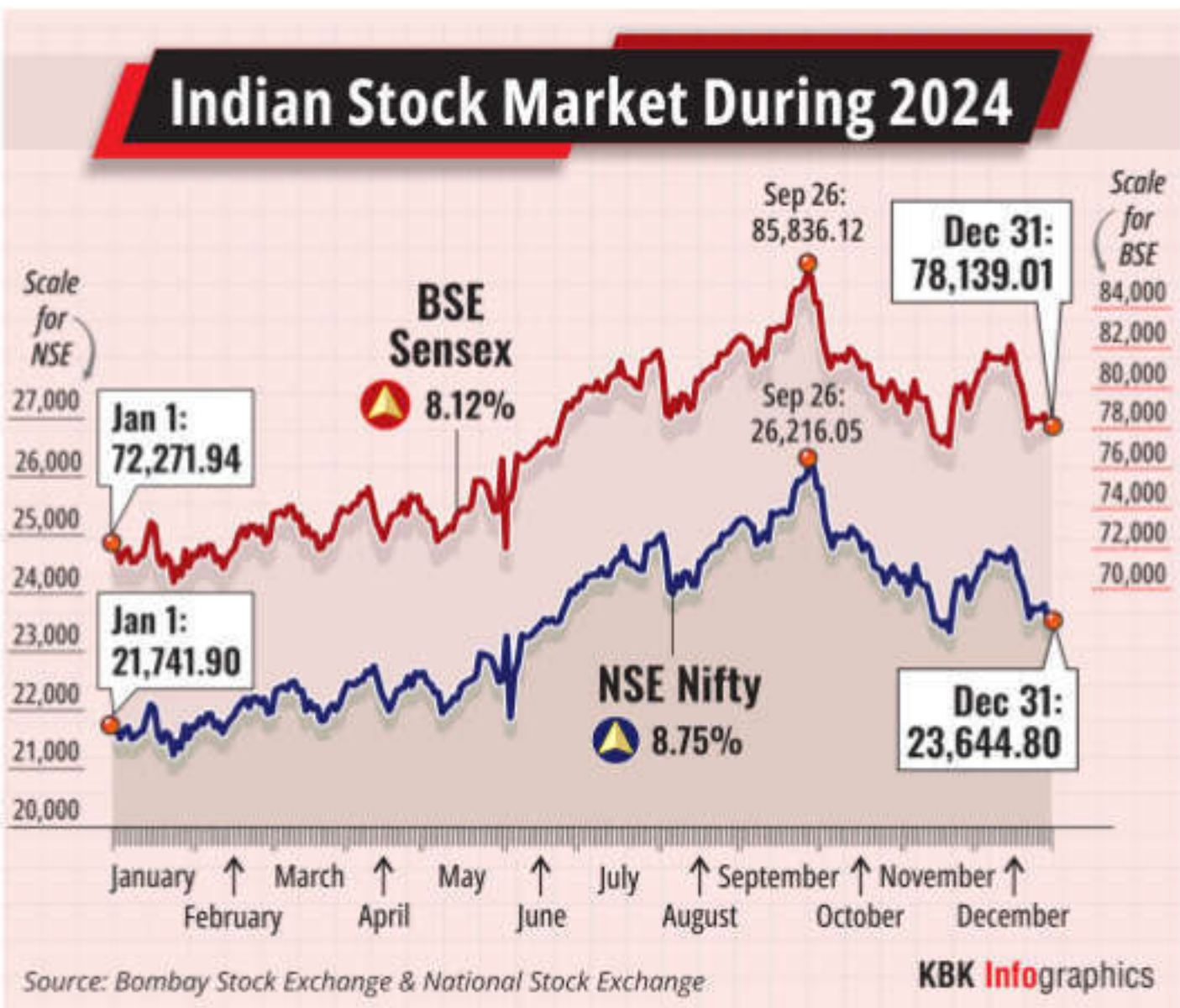


AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

Digitalisation initiatives could provide long-term benefits to the oil and gas industry globally, a report showed on Tuesday. Certain technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, cloud computing, the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, and virtual and augmented reality (VR and AR), are now part of the oil and gas industry. The GlobalData's report, titled 'Digitalisation in Oil and Gas,' highlights the role of major oil and gas companies, such as ADNOC, BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Shell, and TotalEnergies, in the development and adoption of digital tools to solve business problems.

"Field personnel are extensively using handheld devices to gather data, make notes, and communicate with their team. These changes are aimed at cutting down inefficiencies in workflows for improved productivity and lower costs," said Ravindra Puranik, oil and gas analyst at GlobalData. Operational risks are also reduced due to a lesser need for human intervention in hazardous environments, which is a very important benefit of digitalisation. The adoption of digital technologies is also expected to deliver intangible value in the form of emission reductions. A recent poll from GlobalData indicated that companies were deploying digitalization to lower their

operational emissions. With worries over climate change increasing every year, managing emissions has become critical for the industry. Drones are being used to monitor methane emissions in the industry, and AI can be used to determine effective strategies to mitigate methane emissions from daily oil and gas operations. "These efforts are in line with the ESG objectives set by international agreements such as the Paris Accord," said Puranik. As digital technologies are not a core area of expertise for oil and gas companies, the challenge of having a workforce with essential skills remains a key concern. Some of these challenges can be overcome through collaboration with technology experts and regular training on cybersecurity awareness (among other measures). "Industry participants are already doing this with oil majors, such as Exxon-Mobil and Chevron signing long-term partnerships with Microsoft. These would help companies navigate through the technology pitfalls and make further progress in digitalizing their entire operations," the report mentioned.



2024: Make In India 2.0 develops robust manufacturing sector

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

In the year 2024, Make In India 2.0 developed a robust manufacturing sector across 27 categories with renewed vigour and energy. As per the government data, with Rs 1.46 lakh crore investments by August 2024, the initiative has generated Rs 12.50 lakh crore in production, Rs 4 lakh crore in exports, and 9.5 lakh jobs. Exports have also seen a substantial uptick, surpassing Rs 4 lakh crore, driven by key sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, and food processing. Notably, between April 2014 and March 2024, India attracted \$667.41 billion in FDI, representing nearly 67 per cent of the total FDI received over the last 24 years.

In terms of mobile manufacturing, back in 2014-15, domestic mobile phone production stood at 5.8 crore units, which was increased to 33 crore units in 2023-24, with imports dropping significantly. Exports reached 5 crore units, and FDI increased by 254 per cent. In the first seven months of FY25, iPhone production in India reached an impressive \$10 billion, with \$7 billion in exports, a new record. Over the past four years, the Apple ecosystem has also generated 1,75,000 new direct jobs, with over 72 per cent of these roles filled by women. India has achieved 60 per cent import substitution in telecom products under the PLI scheme. Through Make in India initiative, India has grown its influence in the global



pharma industry with nearly 50 per cent of the production is now directed towards exports, the government claims. The automotive PLI scheme has also driven significant investments and boosted production of high-

tech automotive products. Over 115 companies applied, with 85 approved for incentives, expected to attract US\$ 8 billion in investments. Make in India initiative has also shown progress in the defence sector as the

production has reached a record high of Rs 1.27 lakh crore in 2023-24, with exports to over 90 countries. Annual defence production has also crossed 1.27 lakh crore this year, and government aspires to achieve 3 lakh crore in defence production by 2029. Defence exports have also surged from 686 crore in FY 2013-14 to 21,083 crore in FY 2023-24. In the Railways sector, under the Make in India initiative, as of December 2, 2024, 136 Vande Bharat trains with Chair Car Coaches are already operating across the Indian Railways network. Further, Kavach system, designed to enhance train safety, has been deployed on 1,548 Route Kilometers (RKM) on South Central Railway and North Central Railway.

POWERGRID signs green loan agreement with SMBC

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
GURUGRAM, 31 DECEMBER

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a 'Maharatna' Public Sector Enterprise under Ministry of Power, Government of India, has signed a landmark green loan agreement with Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC) on 31st December 2024 at GIFT City, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, underscoring its pivotal role in India's renewable energy transformation. This facility denominated in JPY for a US Dollar equivalent of 200 million with a greenshoe option of US\$150 million highlights the strategic collaboration between POWERGRID and

SMBC to develop critical infrastructure for renewable energy evacuation and integration into the national grid. This loan agreement was signed in the presence of Sh. G. Ravisankar, Director (Finance), POWERGRID, Sh. L. K. Khajkumar, ED (Corporate Planning), POWERGRID and other senior officials of SMBC and POWERGRID. Sh. Ashwani Kumar Gupta, ED (Finance), POWERGRID and Sh. Sriram Kumondur, Managing Director & Head, India Off-shore Banking, SMBC & Sh. Manoj Kaushik, Branch Head, SMBC, Gift City signed this agreement on behalf of POWERGRID and SMBC respectively.

Output of eight key infrastructure sectors slows down to 4.3 pc in Nov

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

The output of eight key infrastructure sectors slowed down to 4.3 per cent in November 2024 against 7.9 per cent growth registered a year ago, data released by the government said on Tuesday. On a monthly basis, the production growth of these sectors was higher than the 3.7 per cent expansion recorded in October 2024. Electricity growth picked up to 3.8 per cent from 2 per cent in the previous month, while fertiliser growth was 2 per cent from 0.4 per cent. Natural gas production recorded a decline of 1.9 per cent versus 1.2 per cent pre-



viously. Refinery products growth moderated to 2.9 per cent from 5.2 per cent in October, while steel production decelerated to 4.8 per cent from 5.2 per cent. The growth of core sectors crude oil, natural gas, cement and was 4.2 per cent during April-November this fiscal. It was 8.7 per cent in the

same period last fiscal. Notably, the coal production maintained stable growth at 7.5 per cent, slightly below October's 7.8 per cent while the crude oil production continued to contract, albeit at a reduced rate of 2.1 per cent, compared to 4.8 per cent in October. Cement industry expanded at the fastest pace of 13 per cent, rising from 3.1 per cent growth in the previous month, while coal sector held steady with 7.5 per cent growth down from 7.8 per cent in the previous month. The eight core sectors contribute 40.27 per cent to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), which measures overall industrial growth.

India's fiscal deficit for Apr-Nov recorded at ₹8.47 trillion

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 31 DECEMBER

India's fiscal deficit for April-November was Rs 8.47 trillion, or 52.5 per cent of the estimate for the financial year, data from the government said. In this period, the net tax receipts were at Rs 14.43 trillion, or 56 per cent of the annual target, compared with Rs 14.36 trillion for the same period last year. Total government expenditure for the eight months was Rs 27.41 trillion, or about 57 per cent of the annual goal. The government spent Rs 26.52 trillion in the same period last year. Till November, the government's capital expenditure,



on spending on building physical infrastructure, was Rs 5.13 lakh crore, or 46.2 per cent of the annual target, as against Rs 5.86 lakh crore for the same period a year earlier. Recently, the finance ministry in a document said

that the government will continue its focus on improving quality spending, strengthening the social security net and bringing down the fiscal deficit to 4.5 per cent of the GDP in FY26. As against total expenditure of Rs 48.21 lakh crore, the expenditure in first half of FY25 was Rs 21.11 lakh crore or about 43.8 per cent of BE. Total non-debt receipt of the Centre was estimated at about Rs 32.07 lakh crore. It comprised tax revenue (net to Centre) of about Rs 25.83 lakh crore, non-tax revenue of about Rs 5.46 lakh crore, and miscellaneous capital receipts of Rs 0.78 lakh crore.

‘Kolkata will remain most affordable residential market in India, premium & mid range will also see upward growth in 2025’

RITWIK MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA, 31 DECEMBER

With yet another year drawing to an end and a whole new year setting in, various stakeholders of the country's real estate sector are looking at how the year gone by played out for them and more importantly how does the new year look to be, what are the promises? Speaking to The Statesman, Sushil Mohta, Chairman, Merlin Group & President, CREDAI, West Bengal, shares his perspectives on these. Excerpts: **Q: How was 2024 for Bengal, in general, and the Kolkata market, in particular, as far as real estate sector is**

concerned --both residential and commercial? Mohta: The year 2024 has been a pretty good year for the overall economy and Real Estate sector riding high on the growing demand, economic growth overall prosperity and growing disposable income in the hands of middle class. The year has witnessed record registration in residential projects till the stamp duty waiver was there. Rera has been a huge differentiator, this has consolidated the market, buyers are more confident in investing as they see their protection! The overall residential market has maintained the upward trajectory of growth since 2021 post Covid and

RERA. As the Home loan rate was stable, further not increased, people are buying properties. The residential market has witnessed several new project launches and unsold inventory also has been reduced to a large extent. Kolkata, largely known as an affordable housing market, has witnessed a spurt in the sales of mid housing range and luxury range. The segment ranging between Rs 60 and Rs 90 lakh has witnessed robust sales. What is very encouraging is that luxury segment in the range of Rs 1 crore to Rs 3 crore has seen a boom. Real estate players offer many luxury features like, luxury club houses with lot of facilities, Gardens, water bodies with



musical fountains, terraces for premium apartments. Though overall market in residential real estate in the

year 2024 is pretty upbeat, the withdrawal of nearly three year long stamp duty rebate in July has witnessed some

decline in home registration. In the year 2024, commercial real estate market also has witnessed a boom

in Kolkata after a long gap. office space leasing in Kolkata stood at 1.2 mn. sq. ft. in Jan-Sep '24 compared to 1.0 mn. sq. ft. in the same period last year. One could see good demand for retail and warehousing also. **Q: What is your take for 2025?** Mohta: Overall we are quite upbeat about the future of residential market in Kolkata in the year 2025 as well. In 2024, more homes are sold in Kolkata than Chennai. In Jan--Sept, a study by international real estate consultant JLL reported sales of over 13,500 homes in Kolkata valued at Rs 8,869 crore. By the end of this year, the

number of homes sold in Kolkata could exceed 17,000 units and over value close to Rs 12,000 crore. This trend will continue in the year 2025 as well and market will mature. Kolkata is expected to remain the most affordable major residential market in India, However the premium range and mid range will see the upward growth as well. **Q: Lot of inventories are coming in Kolkata market, what about the demand?** Mohta: Kolkata will see a growth in sales in the year 2025, so inventories will be absorbed proportionately. Sushil Mohta, Chairman, Merlin Group & President, CREDAI WEST BENGAL



